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**Models of Memory:
Cognition and Cultural Memory
in the Poetry of
Thomas Hardy and Robert Frost**

by
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the
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dedicated to
Stella Charlwood (b.1922), whose rich store of memories captivates me,
and Doreen Hollings (b.1925), whose memory was fading
while I was writing this

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Declaration

This thesis is submitted to the University of Warwick in support of my application for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It has been composed by myself and has not been submitted in any previous application for any degree.

Abstract

This thesis brings together the poetry of Thomas Hardy and Robert Frost, revealing their respective work as peculiarly engaged with memory. Poetic memory is examined at different levels: not just what it means actively to remember, but also how a poem might be more or less characteristically memorable. Hardy and Frost are also revealed as poets who see the unique properties of poetry as a genre in which certain phenomena, people and places might be remembered, if not preserved. While having a strong basis in close analysis and literary history, the project breaks new ground in setting concepts familiar to poetry scholarship within a scientific framework. Interdisciplinary in nature, this thesis uses evidence from psychological experiments to emphasise the cognitive fundamentals which underpin those Hardy and Frost poems remembered as aesthetic or cultural artefacts.

Four core chapters explore issues of expectation, recognition, voice and identity, showing the meeting points for Hardyean and Frostian memory and offering new readings which connect these canonical figures. Throughout, the thesis foregrounds Hardy's and Frost's concern for local memories. Beginning with how the formal properties of Hardy's and Frost's verse appeal to human cognitive predispositions, the project ends by considering how identity is culturally conditioned, and how Hardy's and Frost's poetry restores to significance those individuating features otherwise forgotten by cognitive and cultural memory systems.

Using archival material and the respective letters of Hardy and Frost alongside the poems allows this project to offer a thorough reading of a topic close to both poets' hearts. Beyond a study of two specific poets, this thesis also reveals why and how poetry might be sought after as a valuable mnemonic device and sheds new light on the act of reading poetry.

List of Abbreviations

CP – Thomas Hardy, *The Complete Poems: Variorum Edition*, ed. James Gibson (New York: Macmillan, 1979)

CPRF – *The Collected Prose of Robert Frost*, ed. Mark Richardson (Cambridge, MA; London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007)

CPPP – *Robert Frost: Collected Poems, Prose, & Plays*, eds. by Richard Poirier and Mark Richardson (New York: Library of America, 1995)

Life – *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, ed. by Michael Millgate (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984)

LNTH1 – *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy: Volume 1*, ed. by Lennart A. Björk (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985)

LNTH2 – *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy: Volume 2*, ed. by Lennart A. Björk (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985)

LRF1 – *The Letters of Robert Frost, Volume 1: 1886-1920*, eds. by Donald Sheehy, Mark Richardson and Robert Faggen (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014)

LRF2 – *The Letters of Robert Frost, Volume 2: 1920-1928*, eds. by Donald Sheehy, Mark Richardson, Robert Bernard Hass and Henry Atmore (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016)

PM – *Thomas Hardy's 'Poetical Matter' Notebook*, eds. by Pamela Dalziel and Michael Millgate (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)

INTRODUCTION –

Memory Matters

‘May one remember a memory[?]’

–Robert Frost¹

Thomas Hardy and Robert Frost continued to write in metrical forms in the early twentieth century, seeing advantages to features which other poets began to distrust. Reading Hardy’s and Frost’s verse with a focus on memory helps reveal the cognitive advantages inbuilt within the mnemonic frameworks of metre, rhyme and other poetic features. Through these specific poets, therefore, this thesis contributes to larger debates about the nature of reading poetry and of core poetic traits. Hardy and Frost are often paired as nature poets and as having similar interests in the poetry of local, rustic experience. However, rather than a straightforward comparison of Hardy and Frost, this considers two sometime-contemporaries experiencing similar socio-cultural shifts, showing how each uses poetry to interact with memory. In reading them alongside each other, I highlight their shared concerns with memory. As a literary project interdisciplinary with experimental psychology, this thesis uses Hardy’s and Frost’s poetry to understand the workings of memory with reference to cognitive and cultural processes.

While Hardy and Frost were sometime-contemporaries rather than exact ones, their (poetry) publishing history begins at nearly the same time. Frost’s first poem was published in 1894 and Hardy’s first collection in 1898.² While it took Frost twenty-three years to publish his first full collection, these two poets are more chronologically linked – in that the poetry-reading public could simultaneously read late Hardy and early Frost – than is immediately apparent. I want to consider two similar poets, writing at the historical moment when poetry’s memorability undergoes a change, in order to examine how poetry operates upon and with memory.

¹Dartmouth College, NH, Rauner Library, MS 1178 Robert Frost Collection, Box 16 Folder 5 002337, Notebook c.1911, fol. 26^r. Quotations from the manuscripts of Frost’s notebooks are given in the text with the date of the notebook along with a page number followed by either ‘r’ (recto) or ‘v’ (verso). All notebook manuscripts are listed individually in the bibliography. I follow the same practice with quotations from the manuscripts of Hardy’s notebooks.

²‘My Butterfly’ and *Wessex Poems*, respectively.

Frost's 'An Unstamped Letter in Our Rural Letterbox' is spoken by a contemplative 'tramp' who, seeing a meteor in the night sky, determines that he has 'the equivalent | Only within':

Inside the brain
Two memories that long had lain,
Now quivered towards each other, lipped
Together, and together slipped³

This is the closest Frost comes to describing the cognitive processes of remembering and memory formation. Published in 1947, this is, while artistically rendered, an accurate portrayal of the modern-day neuroscientific dictum 'nerves that fire together, wire together': in (repeatedly) being simultaneously activated, dendrites grow between these previously separate neurons, strengthening the trace and increasing the likelihood of the one exciting the other when a single pathway is activated in the future. Frost may have read William James's law of association that '*When two elementary brain-processes have been active together or in immediate succession, one of them, on reoccurring, tends to propagate its excitement into the other*'.⁴ Frost was, as well as a poet, a man fascinated by the strides being made in the nascent field of experimental psychology.

The letter is 'unstamped'; the 'tramp' goes unnamed: alongside the exactness of the cognitive connection depicted, Frost cultivates ambiguities. Even these four lines urge an investigation into memory and poetry: the rhymes cause a slippage of association between 'brain' and 'lain'; 'lipped' and 'slipped'; 'towards' successfully transforms into the repeated 'together', penned by a poet who would elsewhere note that 'Memory [is] nothing but gains by repetition'.⁵ These memories 'long had lain', suggesting that links can be forged between the previously unrelated, and the long past. Frost's verb 'lipped' remembers the other poet of my study: Thomas Hardy, another poet who followed developments in contemporary brain

³Robert Frost: *Collected Poems, Prose, & Plays*, eds. by Richard Poirier and Mark Richardson (New York: Library of America, 1995), p. 344. References to Robert Frost's writings (all the poetry and some prose) are taken from this edition and will be given in the text as *CPPP* with page numbers.

⁴William James, *The Principles of Psychology: Volume 1* from *The Works of William James*, eds. by Frederick H. Burkhardt, Fredson Bowers and Ignas K. Skrupskelis (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 534 (original emphasis).

⁵MS 1178, Notebook, c.1911, fol. 24^v.

science carefully.⁶ This interdisciplinary thesis studies these two poets as ‘models of memory’, poets with not just an unparalleled commitment to memory, but whose respective practices reveal them to interact with varied modes of remembering in order to demonstrate what memory does for poetry, and what poetry can offer memory.

While many Americans have Frost lyrics committed to memory and while Hardy verses may be easier to memorise than his free verse contemporaries, this is not a thesis about rote memorisation.⁷ I am interested in remembering as a dynamic process happening alongside reading, as well as how poetry depicts and evokes remembering. The poetry discussed stimulates memory without circumscribing it: a focus throughout is not being too prescriptive in writing memories, and leaving something for the reader to provide. When I say that Hardy’s and Frost’s poetry is memorable, I intend the first definition of memorable as ‘worthy of remembrance or note’, more than the secondary (though better known) meaning of ‘easy to remember’.⁸ The memory models Hardy and Frost use their poetry to engage with are experiential: not only do both poets try to represent the experience of remembering, but they also bring the reader’s own experience of remembering, while reading in the present moment, to the fore. Reading itself is an act of remembering: line by line the brain pieces together local patterns while accessing the long-term memory store for semantic information, previous-encountered comparable material and cultural references.

‘We must remember that poetry is said to have been invented as an aid to memory. Poetry might be said to be the most memorable experience a man can have of words’, wrote Frost.⁹ He explicitly claims a mnemonic advantage for poetry over other types of text: it is the ‘*most* memorable’. This thesis explores how far this

⁶One of the few writers to use ‘lip’ as a verb, Hardy famously uses it in ‘The Going’, less so in ‘On a Midsummer Eve’ and ‘Nature’s Questioning’. It is also one of the characteristics Philip Larkin singled out in his 1968 ‘The Poetry of Hardy’: ‘He might say, “I lipped her”, when he means, “I kissed her”, but after all, that brings in the question of lips and that is how kissing’s done’ (*Required Writing: Miscellaneous Pieces 1955-1982* (London; Boston: Faber, 1983), p. 176).

⁷For scholarship on rote memorisation see Catherine Robson, *Heart Beats: Everyday Life and the Memorized Poem*, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012), for a cultural history of memorisation in Britain, and Joan Shelley Rubin, *Songs of Ourselves: The Uses of Poetry in America* (Cambridge, MA; London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2007), for an American perspective.

⁸These are the OED’s definitions A1 and A2, respectively, for ‘memorable, *adj.*’.

⁹ *The Collected Prose of Robert Frost*, ed. Mark Richardson (Cambridge, MA; London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 194. References to Frost’s prose are taken from this edition and are given in the text as *CPRF* with the page number.

statement might have meaning, from both a cultural and a cognitive perspective, an idea which arose from noticing this ‘mnemonic advantage’ in Hardy’s and Frost’s poetry and from dissatisfaction that this trait has not been fully explored: ‘rhyme and rhythm are what make poetry particularly easy to commit to memory’, is a common statement in scientific overviews of memory, but one that undergoes no further examination.¹⁰ Cultural overviews of memory are similarly keen to assert two ancient links between memory and poetry: Mnemosyne, Goddess of Memory, is mother of the muses and, therefore, poetry; the system of memory, according to Cicero was invented by Simonides of Ceos, a poet.¹¹ Frost references this obliquely with ‘poetry is said to have been invented as an aid to memory’. These serendipitous anecdotes, though, pique interest without offering explanation.

Memory is a capacious topic, and I have had to make choices about the types of memory able to fit within the remit of this thesis. While Proust and his madeleines dominate discussions of literary memory, such memories of smell or taste are not included here (not least because sensory memory is scientifically separate).¹² Edward Thomas is another great poetry of memory, but his work remains outside the remit of a thesis which wants to consider Frost alongside Hardy: Thomas’s relationship with Frost is well-documented and could easily overshadow my alternative pairing.¹³ Furthermore, Thomas’s inclusion would be apt only if I were to focus specifically on memory for the landscape (which Hardy, Frost and Thomas all foreground), or sensory memory. Although emotional engagement with remembering is discussed as appropriate to the poetry, affective memory is again left for others to pursue. Much could be said about the differences between English and American memory; however, I pursue an understanding of poetic memory, rather

¹⁰Alan Baddeley, *Your Memory: A User’s Guide*, 2nd edn, (London: Prion Books, 2002), p. 8.

¹¹Uta Gosmann uses the Simonides story as part of her exploration of *Poetic Memory: The Forgotten Self in Plath, Howe, Hinsey, and Gluck* (Madison; Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2012), pp. 133-34; A. S. Byatt’s introduction to *Memory: An Anthology* notes that ‘Memory, or Mnemosyne, was, the Greeks believed, the mother of the Muses. Art is all, at some level, both a mnemonic and a form of memory’ (London: Vintage, 2009), p. xvi.

¹²This is not to say, however, that either Hardy or Frost ignored such memories. Hardy’s ‘The Pat of Butter’ (pp. 806-07) offers a vivid account of taste memory, for instance. All quotations from Hardy poems are from Thomas Hardy, *The Complete Poems: Variorum Edition*, ed. James Gibson (New York: Macmillan, 1979). Page numbers will be given in the text, with *CP* only used when disambiguation is necessary.

¹³Most recently, Matthew Hollis’s *Now All Roads Lead to France The Last Years of Edward Thomas* (2011; repr. London: Faber, 2012) has emphasised this pairing.

than a comparison of national memory which would take this into transatlantic studies.

Hardy's and Frost's work is similarly drawn to memory. Indeed, this thesis not only reveals how memory interacts with poetry as a genre, but posits Hardy and Frost as two poets with a specialised interest in memory. Therefore, it uncovers how cognition and culture help to show Hardy's and Frost's poetry as working with particular models of memory, as well as how the models with which their poetry interacts are themselves influenced by cognition and culture. One of the things to which memory matters a great deal, then, is poetry and – like the last line of Frost's 'Letter' – 'To say as much I write you this' (CPPP 344).

Situating Hardy and Frost

'Frost's vocabulary is virtually interchangeable with Hardy's'
– Paul Muldoon¹⁴

In order to situate this interdisciplinary project, I look first at other works which have linked either Hardy or Frost with scientific contexts, followed by the ways in which the topic of memory already figures in criticism of these poets. Having discussed where my thesis intersects with related fields, I give an overview of the criticism which has previously paired Hardy and Frost.

I adopt a new approach, in bringing contemporary psychological findings to bear on these poets, but reading Hardy from a psychological angle is nothing new. As Suzanne Keen asserts, 'link[ing] Thomas Hardy with psychology and the psychological [...] is a traditional practice that has persisted for over a century', referencing the 1883 Havelock Ellis essay on Hardy which used 'terms drawn from a variety of psychological schools'.¹⁵ Even if Hardy's words were not necessarily psychological, Dennis Taylor points out that 'many of Hardy's archaic terms concern cognition' and provides a comprehensive list.¹⁶

The trend, however, has been to read the psychological in Hardy's novels. Rosemary Sumner's book announces *Thomas Hardy: Psychological Novelist*; Jenny

¹⁴Paul Muldoon, 'Open Invitation: Finding Ways of Getting Lost in Robert Frost's "Directive"', *The Times Literary Supplement*, 5621/2 (24 and 31 December 2010), pp. 17-19 (p. 19).

¹⁵*Thomas Hardy's Brains: Psychology, Neurology, and Hardy's Imagination* (Columbus: University of Ohio Press, 2014), p. 3; p. 2.

¹⁶Dennis Taylor, *Hardy's Literary Language and Victorian Philology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 274.

Bourne Taylor's chapter confines its conclusions to the novels.¹⁷ Sumner began the careful documentation of Hardy's notebook entries concerning contemporary scientific theory, concluding that 'The fact Hardy copied out these passages supports the other evidence of his interest in theories about psychology'.¹⁸ Angelique Richardson furthers this scholarship, though she focuses more on Darwinian influences and Hardy's interest in the unconscious.¹⁹ Philip Davis's *Memory and Writing From Wordsworth to Lawrence* takes Hardy as an object of study, and delineates Hardy's interest in the 'mind-stuff' theory of W. K. Clifford, a contemporary conception of the workings of memory.²⁰ Hardy's consideration, but ultimate rejection, of Clifford shows his engagement with the memory science of his day. Davies, though, is 'particularly concerned with the relation between literature and personal life', whereas I study memory as a function of form and of social circumstances.²¹

Keen's 2014 *Thomas Hardy's Brains* firmly adds Hardy to the agenda of Victorian science scholarship and uses his poetry (and *The Dynasts*) as her primary material. Keen approaches Hardy via affect theory and is particularly concerned with Hardy's own theories of emotion and proving his participation 'in the literary articulation of contemporary brain science'.²² This thesis builds gratefully on Keen's persuasive claim that rather than 'Hardy, the folk-psychologist', there was a 'more learned, book-informed Hardy, who possessed up-to-date knowledge of the psychology of the day'.²³ Yet, where Keen demonstrates Hardy's interactions with

¹⁷Rosemary Sumner, *Thomas Hardy: Psychological Novelist* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1981). Jenny Bourne Taylor, 'Psychology,' in *Thomas Hardy in Context*, ed. by Phillip Mallett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 339-350.

¹⁸Sumner, *Thomas Hardy: Psychological Novelist*, p. 7. Sumner also reproduces Hardy's pseudo-scientific diagrams, including that showing 'Human Passions, Mind, and Character' from 1863 (pp. 5-6).

¹⁹Angelique Richardson, 'Hardy and Science: A Chapter of Accidents', in *Palgrave Advances in Thomas Hardy Studies*, ed. by Phillip Mallett (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 156-80 (p. 172-73).

²⁰See Philip Davis, *Memory and Writing From Wordsworth to Lawrence* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1983), pp. 394-97, for how Hardy read Clifford's ideas of the material world paralleling the mental world. Mathew Campbell also refers to Hardy's relationship with Clifford in *Rhythm and Will in Victorian Poetry*, Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture, 22 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.233.

²¹Davis, *Memory and Writing*, pp. 487-88. This focus on Hardy's personal life – and particularly linking Hardyeian memory solely to his relationship with Emma – also plagues Robert Douglas-Fairhurst's *Victorian Afterlives: The Shaping of Influence in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

²²Keen, *Thomas Hardy's Brains*, p. 12.

²³Keen, *Thomas Hardy's Brains*, p. 20.

Victorian science – and several studies have linked Victorian science to its contemporary literature – I move from the psychological observations of Hardy’s and Frost’s contemporaries to what is now known about the science of memory, in order to analyse both their poetry and the process of reading in ways only available with the advances in the psychological sciences.²⁴ In this, I do not seek to be anachronistic, but to demonstrate how interdisciplinary work can further parallel disciplines.

In terms of Frost, *The Brain of Robert Frost: A Cognitive Approach to Literature* is a promising title; however, no sooner does Norman H. Holland start than he admits ‘I want to use Frost to find a way to think about any brain’ and the problematic expansions begin.²⁵ The majority of the book theorises about what it means to read a poem and concerns over how this is taught.²⁶ While Holland stays away from the topic of memory, he does reveal something telling in his choice of the brain as the starting point from which to explain reading in general. Beyond this, if Frost is considered alongside science, it is usually the biological sciences, following Robert Faggen’s *Robert Frost and the Challenge of Darwin* (1997). More recently, Frost has been linked to astronomy²⁷ and Tyler Hoffman details Frost’s readings of William James and Henri Bergson.²⁸ Frost’s particular interest in, and understanding of, psychological concepts are left as obvious places for contemporary criticism, such as the current study, to begin.

Within Hardy criticism, Tim Armstrong’s *Haunted Hardy: Poetry, History, Memory* and Tom Paulin’s *Thomas Hardy: Poetry of Perception* are particularly pertinent. The former is one of the only critical works to make explicit the importance of memory to Hardy’s work, and the only of book length. Largely concerned with Hardy’s ghosts, both literal and metaphorical, Armstrong raises new ideas of memory, particularly in relation to intertextuality. Through Derrida, Virgil

²⁴See such volumes as Rick Rylance, *Victorian Psychology and British Culture, 1850-1880* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) and Gregory Tate, *The Poet’s Mind: The Psychology of Victorian Poetry, 1830-1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). Tate deals specifically with Hardy and introspection in his conclusion.

²⁵Norman N. Holland, *The Brain of Robert Frost: A Cognitive Approach to Literature* (New York; London: Routledge, 1988), p. 1.

²⁶Holland, *The Brain of Robert Frost*, pp. 139-45.

²⁷Henry Atmore, ‘Frost and Astronomy’, in *Robert Frost in Context*, ed. by Mark Richardson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 333-42.

²⁸*Robert Frost and the Politics of Poetry* (Hanover and London: Middlebury College Press, University Press of New England, 2001), pp. 29-44.

and Dante, Armstrong sees literary references in terms of ‘cinders’ or ‘ghosts of a [...] textual kind’, exploring the importance that previous words and sentiments have for Hardy; ‘cinders’ become a focal image for Armstrong, of what is left for attempted rekindling.²⁹ Armstrong helpfully proves that Hardy’s marginalia is invaluable and stresses Hardy’s revisions in allusion and epigraph choices, the consequences of which I take forward.

Memory is also implicated in Paulin’s book, but he is more interested in the processes of memory depicted rather than the resulting trace: he focuses on perception and how a scene might be encoded. Paulin sets a precedent for turning to experimental science when criticising Hardy, by referring to neuropsychologist A. R. Luria’s *The Mind of a Mnemonist*.³⁰ My own study continues this practice of citing scientific works to illuminate practices within literature. Paulin uses poems as they relate to his thesis, rather than as they rank in Hardy’s output: while admitting the triteness of ‘Green Slates’, Paulin recognises that it gives ‘a useful description of the way his memory operates’.³¹ Similarly, I do not shirk Hardy’s weaker efforts, since they are informative in understanding his poetic process and the development of his ideas on memory. This thesis builds on the work begun by Armstrong and Paulin by progressing to a study of Hardy that centres on memory, using this as a base from which to explore the poet’s output. It also seeks more firmly to situate Hardy within his cultural contexts: his regionalism and sense of a changing community, let alone society, strongly influences his mnemonic stance.

This is an exciting time for Frost studies, with Tim Kendall’s *The Art of Robert Frost* re-opening the value and pleasure of close reading the poems, and the second of a projected five volumes of *The Letters of Robert Frost* published late 2016. The field has advanced far beyond the early misidentifications of Frost as an innocuous, simplistic poet. This is typified by Malcolm Cowley’s 1944 ‘Case Against Mr. Frost’, in which he derides Frost’s exaltation as a national poet because he is ‘affirmative, optimistic, uncritical and “truly of this nation”’: a string of adjectives which do not appropriately modify ‘Robert Frost’.³² At the other end of

²⁹Tim Armstrong, *Haunted Hardy: Poetry, History, Memory* (Hampshire; New York: Palgrave, 2000), pp. 134-72.

³⁰This is a case study of a man with an incredible capacity for memory, and one of the most detailed early studies of extraordinary memory.

³¹Tom Paulin, *Thomas Hardy: Poetry of Perception* (London; Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1975), p. 112.

³²Malcolm Cowley, ‘The Case Against Mr. Frost’, *Robert Frost: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by James M. Cox (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962), pp. 36-45 (p. 37).

the spectrum, Lionel Trilling's explosive speech, in which he states 'I think of Robert Frost as a terrifying poet' and aligns Frost with Sophocles, still has impact.³³ Neither extreme position is unbiased, but Trilling aided the field in breaking the stereotype of Frost as a pleasing farmer-poet and breaking through 'the Chinese Wall of Frostian adulation'.³⁴

As Cowley's criticism suggests, arguments arise when Frost is put forward as an American, or national, poet, speaking to a wider concern with how America is itself remembered. Previous work on Frostian memory has focused on this, with Jeff Westover considering 'National Forgetting and Remembering'. Looking at Frost's prose as well as a handful of poems, Westover considers the thorny issue of the American Indian and how Frost's lines 'simultaneously remember and forget [...] the colonial displacement that lies at the center of American history'.³⁵ Westover offers a detailed case study of national memory, excavating a topic that at the heart of America's relationship between memory and culture, but here I look at Frost's engagement with the local, and with memory beyond this particular, if crucial, historical phenomenon.

Westover's article speaks to the traditional foci of memory studies, which – originally a development of Holocaust studies and trauma studies – has a strong commitment to studying post-conflict, post-crisis societies, and the moral incentive to retrieve or maintain memory in the context of its repression.³⁶ This thesis contributes to the study of everyday memory, memory in a non-pathologised and non-traumatic form, but which nevertheless exerts considerable influence on the present. While the expected names concerning cultural memory appear, memory studies as a whole is usually more concerned with collective memories at the level of states, or countries.³⁷ Instead, I use the theoretical frameworks illuminated by

³³Lionel Trilling, 'A Speech on Robert Frost: A Cultural Episode', *Robert Frost: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by James M. Cox (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962), pp. 151-58 (p. 156).

³⁴Allen Tate, "'Inner Weather': Robert Frost as Metaphysical Poet", *Robert Frost: Lectures on the Centennial of his Birth* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1975), pp. 57-68 (p. 57).

³⁵Jeff Westover, 'National Forgetting and Remembering in the Poetry of Robert Frost', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 46 (2004): 213-244 (223). In this case, Westover is referring to Frost's 'The Vanishing Red'.

³⁶On the ethics of remembering and in particular appropriating the past, see moral philosopher Jeffrey Blustein's *The Moral Demands of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

³⁷Such names as Pierre Nora, Maurice Halbwachs, Aleida Assman and Paul Connerton. Astrid Erll debated the future of memory studies in the wake of the 2010 Transcultural Memory Conference (and the inauguration of the *Memory Studies* journal). Breaking out of national boundaries and the national memory perspective of previous scholars (like Nora), memory studies underwent a "transcultural

scholars to inform a study of memory as it operates at the level of an individual writer and an individual reader. More recently, memory studies has focused on media and remediation in the digital age.³⁸ The medium in question here is the historical art of poetry, leaving my study slightly outside of current critical preferences for memory in the digital age; however, the conclusions drawn here bear on remembering for contemporary society as I uncover mnemonic principles which still pertain. Memory studies usually stays within the social sciences, although this trend is changing, with the July 2016 special issue of *Memory Studies* guest-edited by psychologist Daniel L. Schacter, and focusing more on psychological models of memory.³⁹ I move towards an understanding of memory that embraces the ways humans are cognitively designed for remembering.

Another field with which this thesis converses is that of literature and science, and its many subsets. Cognitive poetics both stresses the importance of literary context and shares vocabulary with the psychology of perception.⁴⁰ While cognitive poetics is tied to linguistics, the approach favoured by this study has closer links with psychology, within which memory constitutes a major research area. Reuven Tsur's work in cognitive poetics, though, is an important touchstone in bringing together science (and experimental data) with an impressive precision in close reading.⁴¹ Citing 'the limitations of short-term memory', much of Tsur's work seeks to show 'how cultural programs may take, in the process of repeated social transmission, forms that have a good fit to the natural capacities of the human

turn" [...] directed towards mnemonic processes unfolding *across* and *beyond* cultures' ('Travelling Memory', *parallax*, 17.4 (2011): 4-18 (p. 9, original emphasis); see also Lucy Bond and Jessica Rapson eds., *The Transcultural Turn: Interrogating Memory Between and Beyond Borders* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014)). Alongside the development of transcultural memory there has also been a movement towards a transnational model of memory as an alternative to the national frame (see Chiara De Cesari and Ann Rigney, eds., *Transnational Memory: Circulation, Articulation, Scales* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014)) and Aleida Assman, 'Transnational Memories', *European Review*, 22.4 (2014): 546-56.

³⁸See Andrew Hoskins, *Media and Memory* (London: Routledge, 2008); Andrew Hoskins, 'New Memory', in *Vision, Memory and Media* (Liverpool: FACT, 2010), pp. 73-82; Andrew Hoskins and Ben O'Loughlin, eds., *War and Media: The Emergence of Diffused War* (Cambridge: Polity, 2010); Joanne Garde-Hansen, Andrew Hoskins and Anna Reading eds., *Save As... Digital Memories* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) and Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney, eds. *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009).

³⁹Martin A. Conway and Qi Wang (to whom I refer in Chapter 4), both appear in this issue, *Memory Studies*, 9.3. (2016).

⁴⁰Vocabulary such as schemas and scripts. See Peter Stockwell, *Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 4-6.

⁴¹See, for instance, 'Rhyme and Cognitive Poetics', *Poetics Today*, 17:1 (1996): 55-87, which speaks to this thesis's concerns with form and voice.

brain'.⁴² The formal systems of verse are implicated in the ways that 'cognitive processes shape and constrain cultural and literary forms'.⁴³ I also gesture towards the recent field of cognitive cultural studies, which 'combines literary and cultural analysis with insights from neuroscience, discursive psychology, cognitive evolutionary psychology and anthropology, cognitive linguistics, and philosophy of mind'.⁴⁴ However, this list of subjects does not translate absolutely to my own methodology here, and cultural cognitive studies is more often used in conjunction with criticism of novels, not poetry.

Mikhail Gronas's study of Russian poetry (Pushkin in particular) merges the spheres of cognitive and cultural. His idea of 'mnemopoetics' accounts for the fact that 'every poem is a mnemonic, and an implicit concern for mnemonic efficiency informs, if not structures, the creative process'.⁴⁵ Gronas makes use of cognitive science and alludes to theories of memory throughout the ages, grounding his arguments in Russian history, looking at memorisation within the educational system. Gronas focuses largely on the spoken rather than the written word and in this he is influenced by David C. Rubin's *Memory in Oral Traditions*. This is the most comprehensive study, so far encountered, of poetic properties by a professional psychologist. Rubin takes devices such as imagery, rhyme and metre, and discusses their psychological properties as cognitive constraints.⁴⁶ Throughout the book, he turns to experimental data to explain features that have been intuitively used in oral traditions for thousands of years. What is most methodologically promising is his seamless progression from descriptions of laboratory experiments to the real-world performances of an epic singer, steeped in her/his particular culture.

The limitation of Rubin's book is that it focuses solely on oral, not written, traditions.⁴⁷ However, Rubin's discussion of ballads in particular speaks to this study

⁴²Reuven Tsur, 'Some Cognitive Foundations of "Cultural Programs"', *Poetics Today*, 23:1 (2002): 63-89 (p. 71; pp. 71-72), the latter phrase being one Tsur borrows from cognitive anthropologist, Roy D'Andrade (1980).

⁴³Tsur, 'Some Cognitive Foundations', p. 64.

⁴⁴Lisa Zunshine, 'What is Cognitive Cultural Studies?', in *Introduction to Cognitive Cultural Studies* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), pp. 1-33 (p. 1). See also Alan Richardson, 'Studies in Literature and Cognition: A Field Map', in *The Work of Fiction: Cognition, Culture, and Complexity*, eds. by Alan Richardson and Ellen Spolsky (Aldershot; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 1-29.

⁴⁵Mikhail Gronas, *Cognitive Poetics and Cultural Memory: Russian Literary Mnemonics* (New York and London: Routledge, 2011), p. 97.

⁴⁶This is the same terminology as Tsur, but Rubin approaches this from a psychological perspective, Tsur from a more linguistics-inflected perspective,

⁴⁷A hint of this bias also seeps into Gronas' text, though he does deal with written material.

of Hardy and Frost, both of whom wrote ballads and were influenced by this tradition. Moreover, they are both known for their use of dialect, conversational style and experiments with the dramatic monologue form. Rubin's work informs my exploration of what happens mnemonically when oral traditions meet the page. These local sounds and voices are among the best remembered features of Hardy and Frost; therefore, the mnemonic techniques inherent to the oral tradition must retain some of that effect in written form. Beyond the areas outlined above, other discourses are used as relevant a given chapter's focus: the significance of this project is not limited to one specific field, but offers a variety of new ways to read Hardy's and Frost's poems critically.⁴⁸

For two so established members of the literary world, there are surprising omissions in the criticism available of both Hardy and Frost, not least in the scarcity of studies comparing these writers, who have long been casually connected. In terms of comparison, one sustained critical effort is from John Bayley, who finds 'Frost's rural tales in verse [...] much more exciting and compelling than Hardy's' and Frost 'making positive and adroit all that in Hardy is negative and placid'.⁴⁹ This criticism positions the two poets in rivalry, while I examine them as in contention with their respective societies (particularly in their insistent privileging of the past), rather than each other. Frost's showmanship and public face certainly set him apart from the reticent Hardy, but Bayley's characterisation does not read into the darker elements of Frost's poetic psyche.⁵⁰ Bayley overstates the contrast between them which, though existent, is not characterised by Frost serving optimism and Hardy pessimism. This thesis instead foregrounds their shared concerns with memory.

Jeffrey Meyers is one of the few writers to extend the Hardy/Frost juxtaposition over a few pages, identifying individual works as points of contact: Hardy's 'Under the Waterfall' becomes a partner for Frost's 'Directive'; 'Waiting Both' for 'Stars'; and 'An August Midnight' for 'Design'.⁵¹ My initial linking of

⁴⁸Chapter 3, for instance, on voice, engages with the emerging field of sound studies.

⁴⁹John Bayley, *An Essay on Hardy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 61.

⁵⁰In portraying Frost as regularly making things 'positive', Bayley continues the strong trend to view Frost as a self-sufficient, optimistic pioneer (something publicly exacerbated by Kennedy's 1960 Presidential campaign).

⁵¹Jeffrey Meyers (*Robert Frost: A Biography*. London: Constable, 1996), pp. 74-79. In a stylistic comparison, rather than an exact pairing, Paul Fussell notes that 'a poem like "Your Last Drive" (written in December, 1912) reaches toward Robert Frost. Here the irony of situation arises from a collision between innocence and awareness' (*The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975; repr. 2013), p. 5). Timothy Steele also offers a single pairing of Hardy's 'The

Hardy and Frost came from inadvertently pairing their poems. Hardy's 'Snow in the Suburbs' with its sparrow covered by 'A snow-lump thrice his own size' (732), is echoed in Frost's 'Dust of Snow' where 'The way a crow | Shook down on me | The dust of snow | From a hemlock tree' gives the speaker new perspective (*CPPP* 205). Furthermore, while Meyers pairs Hardy's 'An August Midnight' with Frost's 'Design', it is Frost's 'A Considerable Speck' which writes back to 'An August Midnight'. In Hardy's poem, five insects 'besmear my new-penned line' (147) while Frost's speaker has 'idly poised my pen in the air' when 'a living mite [...] came racing wildly on again | To where my manuscript was not yet dry' (*CPPP* 324). Paul Muldoon also points to Hardy's continued influence on Frost's output, given that, for instance, 'The Draft Horse' was 'published in *In the Clearing* in 1962 but written, it seems, in 1920, a year after the publication of Thomas Hardy's *Collected Poems*'.⁵² It is hard to know how much of a direct influence Hardy had on Frost, but Hardyian tropes can be read in Frost's writing. Similarities between individual poems, however, is for others to detail: here I focus on where Hardy and Frost meet in their poetic interactions with memory.

At an overarching level, Meyers follows Robert Langbaum in identifying thematic similarities between the two poets. Langbaum's 1982 essay considers them both as rejecting modernism, but also pathetic fallacy and a Romantic relationship with nature. This assessment recognises Hardy's and Frost's innovation, in 'how to be modern without being modernist'.⁵³ Instead of a competitive comparison, here Langbaum recuperates the poets from their (self-willed) exclusion from modernism. Two years earlier, Samuel Hynes defined a 'Hardy Tradition' which not only includes (first and foremost) Frost, but 'is often concerned with the reality of memory and so is retrospective'.⁵⁴ Like Langbaum, Hynes sets up the Hardy

Wound' with Frost's 'Neither Out Far Nor In Deep' (*All the Fun's in How You Say a Thing* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1999) pp. 80-81). Paul Muldoon pairs Hardy's 'Under the Waterfall' with Frost's 'Directive' (in the light of his 'vocabulary' comment from my section epigraph, 'Open Invitation', p. 19).

⁵²Muldoon, 'Open Invitation', p. 19.

⁵³Robert Langbaum, 'Hardy, Frost, and the Question of Modernist Poetry,' *Virginia Quarterly Review* (1982): 69-80 (n.p., online). For a comprehensive guide to criticism on Frost's relationship to 'high modernism' see *LRF2*, p. 300, fn. 313.

⁵⁴Samuel Hynes, 'The Hardy Tradition in Modern English Poetry', *The Sewanee Review*, 88.1 (1980): 33-51 (p. 50). Hynes also relates memory to tradition: 'One might say that memory *is* tradition as it exists privately in individual minds, and communally in parish history' (pp. 38-39, original emphasis).

tradition as an alternative to that forged by the modernists (and particularly Eliot).⁵⁵ Rather than setting Hardy and Frost against each other, or against their modernist contemporaries, I am interested in the specific ways these writers engage with memory: this is not a qualitative judgment between free verse and traditional metrics.

Much Hardy or Frost criticism gives a glancing sentence to the relative similarity of the other before turning back to the one. Reuben Brower notes, of Frost's 'To a Moth Seen in Winter', that 'the drift of the whole poem is toward a Hardy-like irony'.⁵⁶ Randall Jarrell ends an essay by 'saying how much use Frost's poems are to one, almost in the way that Hardy's are, when one has read them for many years'.⁵⁷ This claims a continued relevance for the work of both poets, that such words have a long-standing meaning (if by 'use', Jarrell means personally gratifying to the reader).⁵⁸ Again, naturally observed similarities are overlooked, with both Hardy and Frost criticism in need of a comparative, but not competitive, discussion of the two poets. Importantly, Jarrell highlights the lasting nature of Hardy's and Frost's words – they remain within the memory. It is this multi-faceted quality into which I shall inquire, to uncover how both poets manage to linger not only culturally, but also within individual readers' memories.

Though Frost never met Hardy, he wrote to Susan Hayes Ward, in 1894, that 'Thomas Hardy has taught me the good use of a few words'.⁵⁹ Further praise to the older, established poet can be found in the notebook Frost wrote while in England, stating 'One good thing about Hardy. – He has planted himself on the

⁵⁵R. P. Draper reprises Hynes argument in his chapter purposely entitled 'An Alternative Tradition: Hardy, Housman, Frost, Kipling and Graves', in *An Introduction to Twentieth-Century Poetry in English* (1999), pp. 33-59. Since both Hynes and Draper seek to define a specifically English tradition, they tend to overlook Frost's American voice.

⁵⁶Reuben Brower, *The Poetry of Robert Frost: Constellations of Intention* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 88.

⁵⁷Randall Jarrell, 'To the Laodiceans,' in *Robert Frost: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by James M. Cox (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1962), pp. 83-104 (p. 103).

⁵⁸Mark Van Doren similarly noted that 'The *Collected Poems* of Hardy are a universe through which the reader may travel forever, entertained as he goes by the same paradox as that which appears in the *Complete Poems* of Frost: the universe in question is presented as a grim, bleak place, but the longer one stares at it the warmer it seems, and the more capable of justifying itself beneath the stars' ('Robert Frost's America', *The Atlantic*, 187.6 (1951): 32-34 (p. 33)).

⁵⁹*The Letters of Robert Frost, Volume 1: 1886-1920*, eds. by Donald Sheehy, Mark Richardson and Robert Faggen (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), p. 29. Unless otherwise indicated, quotations from Frost's letters are taken from this edition and are given as *LRF1* with page numbers in the text. Quotations from *The Letters of Robert Frost, Volume 2: 1920-1928*, eds. by Donald Sheehy, Mark Richardson, Robert Bernard Hass and Henry Atmore (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016) are given as *LRF2* with page numbers in the text.

wrongs that can't be righted'.⁶⁰ While this statement may refer to the novels, Hardy's verse hinges on righting the wrongs of memory, as shall be seen. When he lived in England, Frost wrote back to his former student John T. Bartlett, that 'Hardy is almost never seen in a public place. When seen he is not heard. They say he looks like a little old stone-mason. He is an excellent poet and the greatest living novelist here'.⁶¹ This observation is written inside a copy of *Poetry and Drama*, facing Hardy's 'My Spirit Will Not Haunt the Mound', evidencing Frost's reading of this memory-saturated Hardy poem. The poem's speaker intends to leave the grave to 'travel, memory-possessed, | To where my tremulous being found | Life largest, best' and seeks 'backward days', rather than the forward progression of the living (318). As the younger man hoping to get as firm a foothold in the literary establishment, it is unsurprising that more is known of Frost's opinion of Hardy. Though they did not meet in person, Hardy and Frost met in text, in the journal *Poetry and Drama*.

As mentioned above, Frost annotated a copy of the December 1913 edition, but he sent this to Bartlett because his own poems 'The Fear' and 'A Hundred Collars' appear in the same volume.⁶² If Hardy did not read this cover to cover, then one imagines he did devour the December 1914 edition, which included Harold Munro's article on 'Thomas Hardy' and reprinted three poems from Hardy's *Satires of Circumstance*.⁶³ Earlier in that magazine appear four Frost poems for Hardy's gaze, as well as three speech/dialogue-heavy Hardy poems to influence Frost – of interest for Chapter 3.⁶⁴ This journal allowed a reciprocal reading of each other's verse.

Hardy and Frost can be seen both thematising and formalising memory: their subject matter often anchors on memory, loss, the genealogy of both people and objects, inheritance, and memorial landscapes; through using traditional verse forms, they actively engage in the process of remembering. As Gosmann defines, 'poetry is

⁶⁰MS 6261, Notebook 1912-1915, 36^v. Meyers notes that – ever the ad-hoc teacher – Frost once 'gave the highest mark to a student who had memorized and copied out a poem by Thomas Hardy', though I have not found this mentioned elsewhere (*Robert Frost: A Biography*, p. 154).

⁶¹*Selected Letters of Robert Frost*, ed. by Lawrance Thompson (London: Jonathan Cape, 1965), p.104. For reasons unknown, this letter does not appear in *LRF1*.

⁶²*Poetry and Drama* 1.4 (1913): 406-15.

⁶³Harold Munro, 'Thomas Hardy', *Poetry and Drama*, 2.4 (1914): 376-77; the Hardy poems appear on pp. 424-25 of the same edition.

⁶⁴The Frost poems are 'The Sound of Trees', 'The Cow in Apple Time', 'Putting in the Seed' and 'The Smile'. The Hardy poems are 'In Church', 'In the Room of the Bride-Elect' and 'In the Cemetery' (all from the 'Satires of Circumstance').

a *medium* of memory [...] poetry is also a *system* of memory [...] Finally, poetry *represents* and *thematizes* memory, its contents and functioning'.⁶⁵ As shall be seen, Hardy and Frost bring different types of memory into conjunction: the everyday memory of real life (such as conversations) comes into contact with the broader cultural memory of poetic form. Auden called poetry 'memorable speech': both Hardy and Frost lean towards dramatic monologue with their spoken narratives, and the colloquial diction of Frost's *North of Boston* (1914) is praised for cultivating striking voices.⁶⁶ While previous research has coupled Hardy and Frost for their similar poetic content (goblets, leaves, man alone in the landscape) and even poetic practice (colloquial diction and dramatic scenes), it has not identified them as pivotal figures with regards to memory.⁶⁷ These are 'time-torn' men on the cusp of two eras; they straddle two centuries, positioning themselves alongside this seemingly rapid advancement, but insistently anchoring on times past. This makes their work ideal lenses through which to focus a study of memory in poetry at two comparable historical moments. I say 'comparable' to mark that while Hardy's and Frost's poetic careers overlapped, they were men of different eras. However, as shall be seen, much of Frost's fundamental thinking about poetry can be traced to the second decade of the twentieth century, when Hardy was also publishing poems about memory.

Inheritances and influences

'Frost's relation to the poetry of the past – and especially the ballads, Wordsworth, Kipling, *The Golden Treasury* and his kindred spirit Thomas Hardy – is worth emphasizing'
– Jeffrey Meyers⁶⁸

In *Memory and Writing*, Philip Davis declares 'It is with Wordsworth that we must start [...] He is our necessary starting-point'.⁶⁹ The same is true here, since Wordsworth was an important influence for both Hardy and Frost. No greater model for writing poetry of memory perhaps exists, yet Hardy and Frost were to adapt more than adopt his practices. Much as I will argue that the reader is crucially involved in

⁶⁵Uta Gosmann, *Poetic Memory*, p. 4 (original emphasis).

⁶⁶W. H. Auden, *Prose 1926-1938*, ed. by Edward Mendelson (London: Faber, 1996), p. 106.

⁶⁷The previous comparisons highlighted are taken from Jeffrey Meyers.

⁶⁸*Robert Frost: A Biography*, p. 71.

⁶⁹Philip Davis, *Memory and Writing*, p. xxxii.

the interaction between poetry and memory, I here discuss Hardy's and Frost's own reading, recognising that this informed their own poetry.

Both Hardy and Frost place themselves within Wordsworthian traditions by writing ballads and voicing country labourers. Hardy not only quotes Wordsworth's 'Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*' in his own 'Apology' (prefacing *Late Lyrics*), but his many gravestone poems show the influence of Wordsworth's 'Essays Upon Epitaphs', as shall be seen in Chapter 4.⁷⁰ Moreover, James Richardson refers to 'Hardy's persistent, implied dialogue with Wordsworth'.⁷¹ While Wordsworth was the favoured model, both Hardy and Frost write back to the Romantic poets more generally. Criticism which compares either Hardy or Frost with their Romantic ancestors makes similar observations: within Frost's output, 'poem after poem tests Romantic assumptions'; 'Frost's canon may be seen as a purgation of Wordsworth's'; in comparison with the Romantic project, 'fusion is not to be had between a speaker and a scene or person, unless by accident [...] Wordsworth's poems offer metaphysical sure ties that are absent in Hardy'.⁷² Davis overstates the

⁷⁰A small selection of Hardy's arsenal of gravestone poems would include 'Ah, Are You Digging on My Grave?', 'Her Haunting-Ground', 'Rain on a Grave', 'A Poet' and 'In Death Divided'. Hardy also wrote several epitaph poems. 'Sacred to the Memory' is discussed in Chapter 4, but Hardy has four separate poems with 'epitaph' leading the title and Dennis Taylor notes Hardy's markings in his copy of Walter Howe's *Everybody's Book of Epitaphs* (*Hardy's Literary Language*, p. 337).

⁷¹James Richardson, *Thomas Hardy: The Poetry of Necessity* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1977), p. 3. Richardson claims that many of Hardy's poems are 'bounced off the older poet's vision of a beneficent Nature' and gives the example of 'Nature's Questioning'. Hardy's relationship with, and difference from, his Romantic predecessors is also discussed pp. 103-04.

⁷²Mario L. D'Avanzo, *A Cloud of Other Poets: Robert Frost and The Romantics* (Lanham, MY; NYC; London: University Press of America, 1991), p. 81; Sydney Lea, 'From Sublime to Rigmarole: Relations of Frost to Wordsworth', *Studies in Romanticism*, 19.1 (1980): 83-108 (84); Linda Shires, 'Hardy and Nineteenth-Century Poetry and Poetics', in *Palgrave Advances in Thomas Hardy Studies*, ed. by Phillip Mallet (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 255-278 (pp. 259-61). For further discussion of Hardy's Romantic influences, see Geoffrey Harvey, 'Thomas Hardy: Moments of Vision', in Geoffrey Harvey, *The Romantic Tradition in Modern English Poetry: Rhetoric and Experience* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986), pp. 47-70. Lawrance Thompson also contrasts Frost's methods with those of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Emerson in *Fire and Ice: The Art and Thought of Robert Frost* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1961), pp. 30-44. While most critics point out the contrasts between Frost and Wordsworth, Elizabeth Jennings notes that 'Both are poets who turn to nature for moral and emotional elevation or with a certain acquiescent desolation. But both men – and this fact is often forgotten in critiques of their work – are poets of mood' (*Frost* (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1964), p. 11). David Bromwich reads Wordsworth and Frost poems next to each other demonstrating the latter's influence in *A Choice of Inheritance: Self and Community From Edmund Burke to Robert Frost* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989). More recently, Kendall's *The Art of Robert Frost* individual poems as points of contact, such as Wordsworth's 'The Ruined Cottage' for Frost's 'The Black Cottage' (p. 94), or Wordsworth's 'There Was a Boy' for Frost's 'The Most of It' (p.367-68). The latter comparison echoes earlier pronouncements on Frost and Romanticism – 'Frost borrows the setting and all the paraphernalia of Wordsworthian Romanticism in order to confute it' (p. 368). Kendall is surely influenced by Reuben Brower's earlier comparison of 'The Most of It' and 'There Was a Boy' in *Constellations of Intention*, pp.130-35.

case in claiming that ‘Thomas Hardy destroyed William Wordsworth’, though I agree that while ‘Wordsworth was composed by time, Hardy was shaken by his own memory of it within him’.⁷³ This knot of criticism shows that both Hardy and Frost interacted, not always agreeably, with their Romantic forebears – poets who had foregrounded memory as a poetic concern. Remembering is problematised by Hardy and Frost, not only because of the social and poetic changes since the Romantic era, but because of the specific choices they make in depicting memory.

Hardy and Frost also share a love of one particular ‘book of old-golden song’ (CPPP 24) – Francis Palgrave’s *Golden Treasury*, the anthology which contains ‘the best songs and lyrical poems in the English language’.⁷⁴ Dennis Taylor claims that ‘Hardy is arguably a case of a poet urged into his career by an anthology’, referring to this volume.⁷⁵ Hardy’s copy was given to him by his teacher, adviser and friend Horace Moule in 1862. Moule’s suicide affected Hardy greatly; indeed, Hardy has marked the date after he heard of Moule’s death next to an appropriate poem in the Palgrave.⁷⁶ More than an anthology to consult for his craft, this is a book by which Hardy lives his life and charts his experiences.⁷⁷ Similarly, Meyers claims that from the *Treasury*, ‘Burns’ “Bonnie Lesley” provided the name of [Frost’s] first daughter, Lamb’s “On an Infant Dying as Soon as Born” consoled him after the death of baby Elinor’.⁷⁸ Both writers were not just avid readers of the Palgrave, but translated their own lives in and out of its pages.

⁷³Davis, *Memory*, p. 484.

⁷⁴F. T. Palgrave, ed. *The Golden Treasury*. Cambridge: Macmillan, 1861), title page.

⁷⁵Dennis Taylor, ‘Hardy’s Copy of *The Golden Treasury*,’ *Victorian Poetry*, 37.2 (1999), 165-191 (p. 165).

⁷⁶The poem is Shakespeare’s sonnet XXXII, ‘If Thou survive my well-contented day’, and the lines:

O then vouchsafe me but this loving thought –
 ‘Had my friend’s muse grown with this growing age,
 A dearer birth than this his love had brought,
 To march in ranks of better equipage:

But since he died, and poets better prove,
 Theirs for their style I’ll read, his for his love.

In the margin, Hardy has written ‘Sept 25.73’. *The Golden Treasury of the Best Songs and Lyrical Poems in the English Language*, ed. by F. T. Palgrave (Cambridge, Macmillan, 1861), p. 29 (Hardy’s copy held at the Dorset County Museum, Dorchester). Biographer Claire Tomalin notes that ‘on 24 September, [Hardy] heard from the Moule family that Horace was dead’ (*Thomas Hardy: The Time-Torn Man* (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 131). The funeral followed on 26th September.

⁷⁷Hardy’s copy of *The Golden Treasury* also has a newspaper cutting of Moule’s poem ‘Ave Caesar!’ pasted into the back.

⁷⁸Meyers, *Robert Frost: A Biography*, p. 73.

The importance of the *Treasury* can be seen in an 1894 letter Frost wrote to Susan Hayes Ward. Listing poets who influenced him, Frost writes that beyond his given list of names (which includes Hardy) ‘I am fond of the whole collection of Palgrave’s’ (*LRF1* 29). Meyers also notes that Frost ‘told an English friend that he went to England in 1912 partly because “he wanted his poetry to be printed first in the land which had produced the *Golden Treasury*”’.⁷⁹ Like Hardy, the Palgrave motivates Frost’s career and informs his poetic practice. He also taught using the Palgrave: Frost’s self-devised Pinkerton Academy English Curriculum has, under ‘Memorizing’, ‘Twenty poems from the Golden Treasury; basis of subsequent study of the history of English literature’.⁸⁰ The lyrics chosen by Palgrave are not only considered apt for committing to memory, but as providing a ‘basis’ for an entire literary history. The value of this anthology, for Frost, is in distilling what must remain known and studied from English literature. Indeed, according to Mark Scott, ‘Palgrave could do no wrong in Frost’s eyes’.⁸¹

Hardy’s engagement with his Palgrave can be gauged by his numerous annotations throughout the text. He underlines and defines several dialect words in the margin, and comments upon the poems he is reading; indeed, ‘*The Golden Treasury* is the most marked of the anthologies which Hardy owned’.⁸² Meyers points out that ‘Frost discovered Hardy at the same time as Palgrave and read through his novels *A Pair of Blue Eyes* and *Two on a Tower* in the fall of 1892’.⁸³ The Palgrave anthology, with its esteemed poetic models, is a unique link between these two writers. With its preference for ‘songs’ and ‘lyrical poems’, the Palgrave is calibrated for the ear. In the lecture ‘A Tribute to William Wordsworth,’ Frost is preoccupied with voice. He recites ‘The Solitary Reaper’ from memory and corrects himself:

⁷⁹Meyers, *Robert Frost: A Biography*, p. 73. While there is truth to this statement, it became subsumed into the Frost myth of his later success, with Frost remarking about England ‘I said that I had come to the land of *The Golden Treasury*. That’s what I went for. One of my theories was that I went to live under thatch’ (Qtd. in William H. Pritchard, *Frost: A Literary Life Reconsidered* (Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 3).

⁸⁰*CPPP*, p. 662. Jeffrey Meyers notes that Frost himself ‘memorized most of the poems in the anthology, and his children [...] also had to memorize many poems from the Palgrave’ (*Robert Frost: A Biography*, p. 72).

⁸¹Mark Scott, ‘Frost and Anthologies,’ in *Robert Frost in Context*, ed. by Mark Richardson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 107-113 (p. 110).

⁸²Dennis Taylor, ‘Hardy’s Copy of *The Golden Treasury*,’ p. 165.

⁸³*Robert Frost: A Biography*, pp. 73-74.

No voice more sweet has ever thrilled
No.
No voice more thrilling e'er was heard⁸⁴

Tellingly, he does not quite get to the original line, but Frost's version scans well and is remarkably close.⁸⁵ What he remembers is the reaper's 'voice' and the fact that this stimulus was 'heard'. Much of the address revolves around Frost's treasured *Treasury*, in which he encountered the Romantic poets at school, and the appeals of its sonic offerings:

just picking up the book by a leaf here, seeing what that sounds like. And the sound rises from the page, you know, a Wordsworthian sound, or a Keatsian sound, or a Shellian sound.

O world! O life! O time!
On whose last steps I climb,
Trembling at that where I had stood before;
When will return the glory of your prime?
No more – Oh, never more!
That's Shellian, you know.⁸⁶

What is distinctive for Frost as a reader, then, is a poet's 'sound', or what literary critics might term 'voice'. Interestingly, this poem (Shelley's 'Lament') was of special significance for Hardy, too: 'it became one of his most admired lyrics, with its message of joy taking flight, of grief taking the place of delight and its tolling "No more – Oh, never more!"'.⁸⁷ Indeed, Hardy told the *Fortnightly Review* that 'I have very often felt [...] that one of the most beautiful English lyrics is Shelley's *Lament*, "O World, O life, O time"'.⁸⁸ Both poets, then, heard something of note in this musical outcry over a past already lost.

Hardy annotates 'Lament' in his edition underlining 'Trembling at that where I stood before' and noting in the margin that it refers to 'the scene below'.⁸⁹

⁸⁴Robert Frost, 'A Tribute to William Wordsworth' (lecture delivered at Cornell University, April 20, 1950), TS, Rauner Library, Dartmouth College, NH, MS 1178 Robert Frost Collection, Box 20 Folder 8, 13^r.

⁸⁵The original line is 'A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard'.

⁸⁶Frost, 'A Tribute to William Wordsworth', 22^r.

⁸⁷Tomalin, *Thomas Hardy: The Time-Torn Man*, p. 73.

⁸⁸Qtd. in *Thomas Hardy's Personal Writings: Prefaces, Literary Opinions, Reminiscences*, ed. Harold Orel (London; Melbourne: Macmillan, 1967), p. 107 (original emphasis).

⁸⁹*The Golden Treasury of the Best Songs and Lyrical Poems in the English Language*, ed. by F. T. Palgrave (Cambridge, Macmillan, 1861), Hardy's copy held at the Dorset County Museum, Dorchester (p. 301).

Four pages on, he annotates Wordsworth's 'Ode on Intimations of Immortality', a poem which includes the lines

Those shadowy recollections,
[...]
Uphold us – cherish – and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal silence: truths that wake
To perish never⁹⁰

Wordsworth highlights the vitality of sound: it is 'our *noisy* years' that seek a permanent significance. Poetry is an appropriate medium through which to pursue this, being an auditory as well as a visual stimulus. Trevor Johnson notes that Hardy also quotes from Wordsworth's 'Ode' in his 'Apology', and that these Wordsworthian statements are 'absolutely crucial to [Hardy's] poetic creed'.⁹¹ The 'Ode' provides Hardy with the 'obstinate questionings' and 'blank misgivings' that characterise his own poetry and intellectual pursuits.

Given the proximity of the Shelley to this poem, and that Frost lectured specifically on Wordsworth, it seems safe to assume that Frost read 'Ode' in his Palgrave, too. The Palgrave, then, offered some schooling in the poetry of memory, particularly autobiographical memory (a distinctively Romantic mode).⁹² As well as being an archive in itself and an artefact of cultural memory, Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* also provided both Hardy and Frost with songs to be heard from the page, and templates for versifying memory.

For all that both poets would innovate their craft, Hardy and Frost were responding to and expanding upon older traditions in English poetry.⁹³ American

⁹⁰*The Golden Treasury*, p. 305.

⁹¹Trevor Johnson, *A Critical Introduction to the Poems of Thomas Hardy* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), p. 39.

⁹²See, for instance, 'Rousseau and the Romantics: Autobiographical Memory and Emotion', in *Memory in Literature: From Rousseau to Neuroscience* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 24-42.

⁹³Both fit themselves into a tradition which specifically names Wordsworth, as well. Hardy famously notes in the *Life* that 'It bridges over the years to think that Gray might have seen Wordsworth in his cradle, and Wordsworth might have seen me in mine' (p. 417). Dennis Taylor identifies this as 'phrasing [Hardy] took from a 21 December 1916 *TLS* article (Supplement, p. 618) which he pasted into the back of his copy of Gray ("Gray might have seen Wordsworth in his cradle...")' (*Hardy's Metres and Victorian Prosody* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), p. 111). Similarly, Frost states:

I'd like to reach back. I meet somebody 190 years old and he tells me that he was born when his father was 70, and all of a sudden I think, well that reaches back quite a way, that touches

Frost responded to an older, primarily English style; Elaine Barry notes that Frost ‘read widely in English poetry, and, if much of this reading was through Palgrave’s *Golden Treasury*, the battered state of his personal volumes of Wordsworth, Browning, and Arnold carry at least some evidence of his more extended enthusiasms’.⁹⁴

Another influence on Frost which criticism has underestimated is William James. Writing about his Harvard years, Frost notes that he ‘missed James whom I admired most and have been most influenced by’ (*LRF2* 284). Frost not only studied *The Principles of Psychology* himself, he also taught it to his students at Plymouth Normal School.⁹⁵ James remains a touchstone throughout this thesis, as a direct influence on Frost and one of the most significant contemporary voices on psychology for both Hardy and Frost: Keen notes that Hardy also ‘encountered [...] William James’.⁹⁶ Indeed, Hardy proves this himself, by mentioning ‘James’ in his 1920 poem, ‘Our Old Friend Dualism’ (892). Much as studies detailed above have catalogued the notes taken by the poets from their contemporary scientific thinkers, I want to consider these readings in psychology, too, as influential to Hardy’s and Frost’s writing of poetry. While the ‘affective turn’ has recently considered James’s burgeoning theories of emotion (taking his 1884 essay ‘What is an emotion?’ as a foundational text), my interest in him is as a founding father of experimental psychology, whose academic interest in how humans encounter stimuli bore on Frost’s thinking, and bears on my own study of reading and remembering.⁹⁷

hands with Wordsworth, that touches hands with old wars, and old events and people. [...] Just like a chain. It gives that feeling. And I like to think of all the ways – my picking up Palgrave when I was in high school. MS 1178, ‘A Tribute to William Wordsworth’, fol. 21’

⁹⁴Robert Frost on Writing, ed. by Elaine Barry (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1973), p. 49.

⁹⁵See Pritchard, *Literary Life*, p. 64. Plymouth Normal School is today Plymouth State University.

⁹⁶Keen, *Thomas Hardy’s Brains*, p. 5 (the ‘encounter’ was textual, rather than actual).

⁹⁷Indeed, James’s work led to the so-called James-Lange theory (of emotion), the aptness of which is still debated (see Phoebe C. Ellsworth, ‘William James and Emotion: Is a Century of Fame Worth a Century of Misunderstanding?’, *Psychological Review*, 101.2 (1994): 222-29; Jesse Prinz, ‘Emotions Embodied’, in *Thinking About Feeling: Contemporary Philosophers on Emotions*, ed. Robert C. Solomon (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 44-58). For James within affect studies see, among others, Richard Shusterman, ‘Thought in the Strenuous Mood: Pragmatism as a Philosophy of Feeling’, *New Literary History: A Journal of Theory and Interpretation*, 43.3 (2012): 433-54. Robert C. Solomon’s edited volume takes its title from James’s 1884 essay ‘What Is an Emotion?’ (*What is an Emotion? Classic and Contemporary Readings*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003)). As Margaret Wetherell points out, ‘the writings of William James [...] need to be set, however, in the context of recent psychobiological research’ (*Affect and Emotion: A New Social Science Understanding* (London: Sage, 2012)). Wetherell’s concern with James is that he ‘fits the bill’ in the search for a ‘familiar “one great theorist of the past”’ (p. 10). Beyond affect studies, James’s work is

Memory matters: Loss, locality and value

‘To-day – has length, & breadth, & thickness, & colour, & voice,
& smell. As soon as it becomes Yesterday it is a thin layer among
many layers, without size or colour or smell or voice. Jan ‘97’
– Thomas Hardy⁹⁸

Writing to thank J. J. Foster for sending him volumes of *Miniature Painters*, Hardy admits to being ‘sad’ over ‘how much more than has here left a record behind has passed utterly away without a trace’.⁹⁹ Memory is occasioned by absence, if not loss. More will be forgotten than remembered about the world, let alone Hardy’s and Frost’s respective societies. Therefore, one thread running throughout this thesis is that of value. What is selected to be artificially preserved in text (since writing, as something external to the body, is a form of artificial memory) is selected for reasons of value. Memories hold particular value(s), which vary depending on whose eye is doing the beholding. ‘How some things linger!’ writes Frost in ‘The Death of the Hired Man’ (*CPPP* 42). This delicate exclamation hints at the much larger questions involved. Cognitively as well as culturally, memory operates within a condition of loss. As memory studies scholar Jeffrey K. Olick states, ‘People do not perceive every aspect of a situation, they do not store every aspect they perceive, and they do not recall every aspect they store’: there are three potential losses from the moment any stimulus is encountered.¹⁰⁰ Only the knowledge of ‘some’ of the world’s various works and days remain available after the event: James notes that while the ‘stream of thought flows on [...] most of its segments fall into the bottomless abyss of oblivion’.¹⁰¹ How is it possible to make it into this select group, then, that ‘lingers’ for years, which ‘leave vestiges which are indestructible, and by means of which

also much-discussed alongside modernist prose, thanks to his theorising – in *Principles* – about ‘The Stream of Thought’ (Chapter IX).

⁹⁸*Thomas Hardy’s ‘Poetical Matter’ Notebook*, eds. by Pamela Dalziel and Michael Millgate (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 21 (original emphasis). References to this will be given in the text as *PN* with page numbers. This quotation is refigured in Hardy’s *Life and Work* as ‘1897, January 27. To-day has length, breadth, thickness, colour, smell, voice. As soon as it becomes yesterday it is a thin layer among many layers, without substance, colour, or articulate sound’ (*Life*, p. 302).

⁹⁹5.231. Quotations from *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy* Vols. 1-7 ed. Richard Little Purdy and Michael Millgate are given in the text as volume number and page number, such as 5.231 here. All volumes are individually listed in the bibliography

¹⁰⁰Jeffrey K. Olick, ‘Collective Memory: The Two Cultures’, *Sociological Theory*, 17.3. (1999): 333-348 (p. 340).

¹⁰¹James, *Principles of Psychology*, p. 605.

they may be recalled as long as life endures'.¹⁰² This question could be rephrased as 'how does something become valuable?', a vein of enquiry which runs throughout this thesis.

At first glance, the concept of value may seem at one remove from memory, but the two are intertwined: as Halbwachs resolves 'what we call the framework of memory is also a concatenation of ideas and judgements'.¹⁰³ Value runs as a consideration through all of the research presented here, the stubbing-point for the toe of memory. Memorability provides cultural currency and a way of reaching a wide audience. Thus, being memorable confers influence on something. In this, I am not merely talking about cultural value, but also personal value. The question of value and memory also embraces the relationship between emotion and memory. Those things which have a strong emotional valence or personal connection are more likely to be remembered, and there are ways to encourage mnemonic attachment, as shall be seen.

Local knowledge, regional memory, is by its nature particular: you have to be or have been present in the area. To exemplify this, I use an anecdote about Hardy from Arthur Compton Rickett:

You could soon puzzle him with a familiar quotation, and Hardy was cheerfully indifferent should he fail to recall some well-known line of Shelley's, which he did on one occasion. He was full of concrete happenings about his dwelling – of Father X and old Mother Brown and of the young girl in the draper's shop. His eye kindled when speaking of these; but let the talk veer to literary values and he became a different man – a bored man¹⁰⁴

While the idea that 'literary values' 'bored' Hardy belies the careful his documenting of contemporary poetic debates, this anecdote points to Hardy's love of the local.¹⁰⁵ It demonstrates the shift in which I am interested away from verbatim memory and towards what memory can perpetuate: this is what is revealed by Hardy's own

¹⁰²James, *Principles of Psychology*, p. 605.

¹⁰³Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 1941, trans. by Lewis A. Coser (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 176.

¹⁰⁴Qtd in *Thomas Hardy Remembered*, p. 290.

¹⁰⁵This was also a family trait: when Hardy's mother died in 1904, he wrote 'She had been a woman with an extraordinary store of local memories reaching back to the days when the ancient ballads were everywhere heard at country feasts, in weaving shops, and at spinning-wheels' (*The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, ed. Michael Millgate (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984), p. 345. Hereafter this is referred to as *Life* and given with page numbers in the text.

poetry. This is not a thesis extolling Hardy's and Frost's prodigious powers of memory (although both appear talented at recalling verse), but rather about memories specifically chosen and carefully cultivated.¹⁰⁶ If you dedicate yourself to what your current community says, does, thinks and knows, and how they say, do, think and know it, loss registers much more quickly, and sharply. As already mentioned, both poets favoured ballads, a form which 'impl[ies] a sharing community and a fairly confined one: not Europe or the world, but a country, or a county, or a congregation – some homogeneous group with a body of common experience'¹⁰⁷ It is in part their attention to locality that makes Hardy and Frost, respectively, obsessive documenters and recorders of specific rural lives.

This thesis studies a historical period of peculiar mnemonic interest. While Frost may be remembered as a twentieth century American poet and Hardy more readily as an English novelist, both men lived and wrote through the turn of the century. Poetically, too, they spanned a significant range: though Hardy hob-nobbed with high Victorian, Robert Browning, literary Impressionist Ford Madox Ford published a Hardy poem; Frost's life – if not quite career – spanned Whitman's yawping to Ginsberg's howling.¹⁰⁸ These, then, are two poets who witnessed a particular historical moment of great change. With change comes loss, and with loss a new, or renewed, interest in memory to preserve what is valued.

In this, I do not just mean societal changes of industrialisation and increased urbanisation, but significant shifts in poetic form. As Taylor notes,

Hardy's poetic career lasted from 1860 to 1928, thus encompassing the mid- and late Victorian periods, the Edwardian and Georgian periods, the post-war period, and the twenties. This time-span represents the climax and end

¹⁰⁶Frank Harris remembers how Hardy 'astonished me one evening by continuing some verse of Swinburne's *Atalanta in Calydon* that I had quoted' and Ford Madox Ford also recalls Hardy's reciting the opening lines of the Second Book of *The Aeneid* (qtd. in *Thomas Hardy Remembered*, ed. by Martin Ray (Aldershot: Aldgate, 2007) p. 77, p. 86). Frost is often heard quoting verse in his lectures and letters, with his most public feat of verbatim recitation being his own 'The Gift Outright' at President Kennedy's inauguration. Hardy's letters further suggest his impressive memory: writing to Sir Anthony Hope Hawkins he details 'the last time I saw you was, I think, across a huge blue table at Wellington House, Buckingham Gate, on that memorable afternoon in September 1914, the yellow sun shining in upon our confused deliberations in a melancholy manner that I shall never forget' (6.17). Being called to London to discuss, with other writers, 'to assist in the public articulation of British war aims' (editorial note 6.18) would have likely heightened the memorability of this particular occasion.

¹⁰⁷Hynes, 'The Hardy Tradition', p. 38.

¹⁰⁸Dennis Taylor measures the span of Hardy's writing as 'he straddled the eras of Saintsbury and of Joyce' (*Literary Language*, p. 3) and in terms of literary criticism as 'from [Coventry] Patmore's landmark article in 1857 to the beginning of new criticism' (*Hardy's Metres*, p.4).

of the 500-year era of accentual-syllabic verse in English, that is the era when rhymed or blank accentual-syllabic verse was the norm, not the exception.¹⁰⁹

Taylor makes a strong case for the importance of this period metrically, something Meredith Martin has recently followed, arguing that 1860-1930 is ‘a crucial epoch’ in the history of English literature, almost the exact dates of Hardy’s poetry-writing life, and crucial years of reading, then writing, for Frost.¹¹⁰ Taylor, then Martin, has marked out this period as more than a transition from Victorian to modern, revealing intricate debates over metre and prosody which Hardy was reading, and of which Frost would feel the ripples.

Above, I compared Hardy and Frost in their privileging of the past. The preference of the speaker in Hardy’s ‘She Opened the Door’ is clear when the poem ends ‘She opens the door of the Past to me, | Its magic lights, | Its heavenly heights, | When forward little is to see!’ (773). This poem itself harks back to the past, being published in 1925, but dated 1913. Commenting on ‘My Spirit Will Not Haunt’, with its ‘backward days’, Taylor notes that ‘Hardy’s whole poem engages us with the reality of the past as a norm of the present, a “backward” norm, by which past becomes present’.¹¹¹ ‘Joys of Memory’ shuns ‘the dun life here around me’ in favour of the past, but the speaker here is more negative, noting ‘I house with dust’ due to her/his ‘heartsome zest | For things that were’ (437). The ‘joy’ here is double-edged. The past holds peculiar promise for Hardy and, though not with the same ache of loss, Frost also identified this quality of richness, and takes the reader ‘Back out of all this now too much for us’ and ‘Back in[to] a time made simple by the loss of detail’.¹¹² Indeed, Brower notes that ‘Frost has always been much occupied with redeeming the past’.¹¹³

This ‘backward norm’ manifests not just as a love of the past, but a distrust of the progress mechanised society brought. Having moved to Lawrence, MA, a mill town, as a young boy, Frost’s ‘A Lone Striker’ comes from seeing mills in action. Amid the machinery, the speaker saw ‘where the human still came in’ in repairing

¹⁰⁹Taylor, *Hardy’s Metres*, p. 4.

¹¹⁰Meredith Martin, *The Rise and Fall of Meter: Poetry and English National Culture, 1860-1930* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012), p. 1.

¹¹¹Dennis Taylor, *Literary Language*, p. 340.

¹¹²This is the opening of Frost’s ‘Directive’ from *Steeple Bush* (CPPP, p. 341).

¹¹³Brower, *Constellations of Intention*, p. 227.

the thread (*CPPP* 249). The poem prefers nature to mechanisation, but Frost's tone remains aloof, polite: 'The factory was very fine; | He wished it all the modern speed' (*CPPP* 250). Such a wish is tongue-in-cheek for someone who valued more aimless and past-enriched approaches to existence. Having arrived late, the employee finds the gates closed and goes instead to 'another place, a wood' (*CPPP* 250).

'The modern speed' is something which Hardyean speakers also feel, particularly in its insistence on advancement. 'Old Furniture's' speaker berates himself for having spent six stanzas contemplating the past, ending

Well, well. It is best to be up and doing,
 The world has no use for one to-day
 Who eyes things thus – no aim pursuing!
 He should not continue in this stay,
 But sink away. 486

'Use', 'aim': Hardy's 'to-day' expects a level of personal industry which recollection does not provide. While 'stay' means delay or cessation of activity, it also carries the sense of 'remaining in a place, continued presence', which is what Hardy's speakers do by continuing to reside in the past.¹¹⁴ As Brian Green asserts, the speaker here implies 'that he discerns a problem: society's need to be aware of cultural continuity'.¹¹⁵ Instead, Hardy gives the sense that society has discarded the past in favour of the future. The much earlier sonnet 'She, to Him III' is voiced by a speaker who recognises she is 'Despised by souls of Now, who would disjoint | The mind from memory, making Life all aim' (16). 'Old Furniture' is the more damning when this earlier competition between 'aim' and 'memory' is taken into account. As this thesis shows, Hardy and Frost are not, or not merely, 'souls of Now', but men who see the value, and invest value, in 'then' – the past.

In society, as well as in poetry (with rhyme and metre on the wane, see Chapter 1), 'the world had found new terms of worth' (*CPPP* 32). This comes from 'Pan With Us', from Frost's first – and more old-fashioned – collection, *A Boy's Will* (1913). Pan bespeaks bygone traditions and a bygone age and since 'Times were changed from what they were: | Such pipes kept less of power to stir' (*CPPP* 32).

¹¹⁴This is definition 6a for 'stay, *n.*3', OED.

¹¹⁵Brian Green, *Hardy's Lyrics: Pearls of Pity* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), p. 148.

Reading Pan as representative of poetry, I see both Hardy and Frost as sitting at odds with their societies by remaining focused on the past.

For one's work to be valuable is probably not the primary goal of a poet, but to be memorable would be a logical aim. Writers can be more or less aware of this, depending how far s/he is courting the public. Frost, unlike Hardy, had strong aims for his public memorability: in a 1923 letter to Untermeyer, Frost revealingly writes: 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Etc is my best bid for remembrance' (*LRF2* 339), displaying his engagement with an 'implicit concern for mnemonic efficiency'.¹¹⁶ Frost's prediction for 'Stopping' may have come true, but more importantly it is evidence of Frost intending memorability and to secure his place within culture.¹¹⁷ Ever the eager contender, 'bid' turns poetry into a game which one can win or lose. Hardy is the opposite in this respect. A well-known novelist, his poetry was the more personal part of his output. As Barbara Hardy puts it, the novels are 'willed, commercial, breadwinning work compared with the less lucrative poems which at first could not command publication, let alone royalties'.¹¹⁸ Hardy did not put his poetry into the public domain until 1898, with *Wessex Poems*.

For all that I elucidate their innovations within poetic form and in terms of memory's reach, both Hardy and Frost are to an extent traditionalists. Chapter 1 looks at this from the perspective of their contemporary poetic climate, but, as the last section showed, both respond to previous poetic traditions. Attention to past forms is certainly a way in which Hardy and Frost stood out from their poetic contemporaries, but knowledge of the past is essential to any creativity. Negus and Pickering note that 'the generation of creativity through resistance to a tradition still

¹¹⁶Which Gronas claims to be central to poetry's structure (*Cognitive Poetics and Cultural Memory*, p. 97).

¹¹⁷'Stopping' has enjoyed continued popularity in the public imagination. Robert Pinsky's Favorite Poem Project of 1997-2000 aimed to discover America's favourite poems. With over 18,000 submissions, it merits comment that Frost came in at first (with 'The Road Not Taken') and third (with 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening') (Martin Kettle, 'Americans choose the road not taken', *The Guardian*, 11 April 2000, Books section, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2000/apr/11/1?CMP=share_btn_link> [accessed 16 December 2012]). The current Poetry and Memory Project is just beginning to discover Britain's best-remembered poems, and preliminary survey results show 'Stopping by Woods' to be one of six poems to come up in five separate responses, with 'The Road Not Taken' and 'Fire and Ice' each showing up twice (Debbie Pullinger, 'Re: Poetry, Memory and Performance conference', Email to the author, 4 June 2015).

¹¹⁸Barbara N. Hardy, *Thomas Hardy: Imagining Imagination: Hardy's Poetry and Fiction* (Athlone Press, 2000), p. 84.

requires knowledge of that tradition'.¹¹⁹ This argues that memory of, and for, traditional versification gives free verse value, that '*Vers libre* in modern poetry made sense only in its break with recurrent metrical patterns and a set quota of syllables per line'.¹²⁰ Once conventions have been established, future work relates to them, even if it is to side-step or abandon. Frost said so much himself when, commenting on Pound and free verse in a 1959 interview, he claimed that 'if we hadn't had the years of formal verse, this stuff wouldn't be any good [...] The shadow [of formal verse] is there; that's what gives it any charm it has'.¹²¹ In another assessment, Frost argues that free versifiers 'should more properly be called mixed verse writers [...] because while they stick to the old meters they permit themselves to change meters from line to line in the same poem'.¹²² Memory for traditions ensures that no art work is created in a vacuum.¹²³

Methodology

'We have the opportunity to move beyond the apparent mutual irrelevance
of neurological and psychological studies of memory on the one hand
and sociological and cultural approaches on the other'
– Jeffrey K. Olick¹²⁴

In 1999, Olick sought to reconcile 'The Two Cultures' within memory research, referencing C. P. Snow's characterisation of the division between the sciences and the humanities. As an interdisciplinary project, this thesis takes advantage of the opportunity Olick outlines, but it is worth pointing out that while modern-day memory scholars may be subject to a sense of division, historically this was not so. Hardy's and Frost's notebook entries show both men engaging with scientific debates alongside artistic ones, in part because their contemporaneous culture(s) saw no such separation between ideas and intelligences. William James often turns to poetry to demonstrate a psychological principle: in 'Association' he declares 'Take, to fix our ideas, the two verses from "Locksley Hall"' and uses Tennyson's lines to

¹¹⁹Keith Negus and Michael J. Pickering, *Creativity, Communication and Cultural Value* (London; Thousand Oaks, CA; New Delhi: Sage, 2004), p. 112.

¹²⁰Negus and Pickering, *Creativity*, p. 89.

¹²¹Qtd. in *Robert Frost on Writing*, p. 158.

¹²²*LRF2*, p. 219.

¹²³In his 1954 prose work 'The Prerequisites', Frost outlines a theory of reading which determines 'A poem is best read in the light of all the other poems ever written' (*CPRF*, p. 174).

¹²⁴Jeffrey K. Olick, 'Collective Memory: The Two Cultures', *Sociological Theory*, 17.3. (1999): 333-348 (p. 340).

exemplify word association.¹²⁵ Moving forwards to the 1930s, literary critic I. A. Richards (of interest for Chapter 1) saw no difficulty in uniting the worlds of psychology and poetry in his books.

While I quote from psychological papers, I never mistake my project for an empirical one, nor myself for a scientist. Cognitive science, I demonstrate, offers a further dimension for the critical apparatus, allowing for more incisive, and nuanced, readings of literary materials. Besides the proliferation of experimental papers being published in journals by memory scientists, there has been an increased dedication to disseminating knowledge about memory processes: cognitive explanations for mnemonic phenomena are now not just accepted, but an expected demystification.¹²⁶ As Suzanne Nalbantian has aptly noticed, ‘in light of the immense scientific research on memory in recent times, it seems most appropriate to address the topic from the literary optic’.¹²⁷ The interest in memory for poetry is borne out by the 2013 paper ‘By Heart’ in which researchers at Exeter (across Medical, Psychology and English departments) used fMRI technology to look at brain activation in reading passages of poetry and prose. One difference found was that ‘areas in both hemispheres, associated with introspection, are activated by poetry to a greater degree than by prose’.¹²⁸ More recently, Philip Davies – the literary scholar of *Memory and Writing* – has joined a team of psychologists researching ‘why reading might benefit wellbeing’.¹²⁹ A recent experiment aimed to measure literary awareness, a term used for ‘the capacity to consider, manipulate, and derive meaning in complex text’.¹³⁰ Like ‘By Heart’, the experimenters were interested in the differences in processing

¹²⁵*Principles*, p. 534, though the discussion crosses pp. 534-44. In his chapter ‘Memory’, James also writes of trying to learn lines of poetry off by heart: he learns lines of Victor Hugo and of *Paradise Lost*, and details other psychologists’ attempts to learn *In Memoriam*, *Idylls of the King* and Schiller’s translation of *The Aeneid* (p. 627, footnote 27). The memorability of poetry comes back in others of James’s works, too: in discussing ‘Mysticism’ he notes that ‘Most of us can remember the strangely moving power of passages in certain poems read when we were young’ and how these words ‘fetch these vague vistas of a life continuous with our own’ (from *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, qtd. in *William James: A Selection from His Writings on Psychology*, ed. by Margaret Knight (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1950), p. 208).

¹²⁶See, among others, Daniel Schacter’s *The Seven Sins of Memory: How the Mind Forgets and Remembers* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002) and Charles Fernyhough’s *Pieces of Light* (2012; repr. London: Profile Books, 2013).

¹²⁷Suzanne Nalbantian, *Memory in Literature*, p. 1.

¹²⁸Adam Zeman, Fraser Milton, Alicia Smith and Rick Rylance, ‘By Heart: An fMRI Study of Brain Activation by Poetry and Prose’, *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 20.9-10 (2013): 132-158 (148).

¹²⁹Noreen O’Sullivan, Philip Davis, Josie Billington, Victorina Gonzalez-Diaz and Rhiannon Corcoran, “‘Shall I compare thee’: The Neural Basis of Literary Awareness, and its Benefits to Cognition”, *Cortex*, 73 (2015): 144-157 (p. 144).

¹³⁰O’Sullivan and others, “‘Shall I compare thee’”, p. 144.

prose and poetry. Both studies evidence current interest in poetry and the reading brain, even if this is not memory proper. Moreover, in considering ‘poetic processing’ and ‘expectation biases’ it speaks to my own interests.¹³¹ While these two examples come from neuroscience, I focus on cognitive psychology which, via James and I. A. Richards (see Chapter 1), has closer links with literary history, and can show how poetry stimulates certain cognitive processes and recruits the reader in particular ways.

The use of psychology might be seen to be borrowing an objective, empirical stance, yet this thesis is more interested in where memory science meets the real-world phenomena of memory. I argue that no account of memorability is valuable unless it accepts that every poem, poet and reading is culturally coded. This thesis recognises the truth that ‘It is a mistake to try to understand the importance and structure of memory by attending solely to cognitive mechanisms or to the content of memory experiences without attending to the occasions of memory activities, including the occasions of narrative activities’.¹³² In my use of scientific sources, I am not swapping a theoretical framework for a scientific one: different theories and ideas are brought to bear on the material as is most appropriate to help read Hardy and Frost poems. There are, as Olick asserts, ‘mnemonic technologies other than the brain’, a maxim at the heart of my own work, particularly as I demonstrate how poetry is itself a mnemonic technology.¹³³ Specific concepts from memory research will be raised in individual chapters, but here I offer an overview of some fundamentals of memory, along with two concepts which inform the thesis as a whole.

Short-term memory (STM), or working memory, has a capacity of 7 ± 2 pieces of information. This is more to do with the information that can be held in the mind at one time and is implicated at the micro-level of reading a poem line by line and processing such features as rhyme and metre.¹³⁴ Long-term memory (LTM) has several categories. First, there is a division between explicit (requires conscious awareness) and implicit (does not require conscious awareness) memory. The latter

¹³¹O’Sullivan and others, “‘Shall I compare thee’”, p. 153.

¹³²Sue Campbell, *Relational Remembering: Rethinking the Memory Wars* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), p. 185.

¹³³Olick, ‘Collective Memory’, p. 342.

¹³⁴The human brain’s capacity for manipulable information is an important dimension of Tsur’s work in the field of cognitive poetics.

category includes priming (enhanced identification of certain stimuli) and procedural memory (skill-/habit-based memory, like that for riding a bike, which remains intact even in amnesia). Explicit memory is further divided into two categories: semantic memory and episodic memory. Semantic memory is that for facts or general knowledge, a sense that ‘I [factually, conceptually] know that’. By contrast, episodic memory is for personally experienced events which have a specific context, ‘has a unique subjective coloring, and is [...] strongly affective’.¹³⁵ I also adopt a scientific lexis in referring to schemas, a word introduced by British experimental psychologist, Frederick Bartlett. A schema is ‘an active organisation of past reactions, or of past experiences, which must always be supposed to be operating in any well-adapted organic response’.¹³⁶ Schemas offer a yardstick by which experience can be measured. They are also culturally inflected, since one’s understanding of, for instance, ‘shopping for food’ will vary culturally.

With the memory system outlined, two concepts need introducing. In 1972, Craik and Lockhart proposed a Levels of Processing model, claiming that those items which are best remembered are those which have been most deeply processed at the time of encoding, or, in their words, ‘the memory trace is better described in terms of depth of processing or degree of stimulus elaboration. Deeper analysis leads to a more persistent trace’.¹³⁷ Fundamentally, the more the brain is asked to do with a given stimulus, the better it is remembered. Rather than encoding phonological or visual similarity, when the brain is engaged in semantic analysis to understand a given stimulus, this so-called ‘depth of processing’ aids its remembrance. Again, this notion has an early formulation in James’s writings, since he affirms that ‘of two men with the same outward experiences and the same amount of mere native tenacity, *the one who THINKS over his experiences most*, and weaves them into systematic relations with each other, *will be the one with the best memory*’.¹³⁸ This is an idea to which I shall return, highlighting how poems ask for different levels of understanding from the reader and thus engage the reader’s memory. The second concept is remarkably simple, yet fundamental to this thesis:

¹³⁵ Astrid Erll, *Memory in Culture*, trans. by Sara B. Young, *Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2011), p. 85.

¹³⁶ F. C. Bartlett, *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology*, 1932 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 201.

¹³⁷ Fergus I. M. Craik and Robert S. Lockhart, ‘Levels of Processing: A Framework for Memory Research’, *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior* 11 (1972): 671-684 (677).

¹³⁸ James, *Principles*, p. 623 (original emphasis).

A maxim of memory theory is that unique cues are the most effective at bringing up memories; the more items or contexts a particular cue is associated with, the less effective it will be at bringing up a particular memory.¹³⁹

It is for this reason that habitual actions (such as taking daily medication) become near impossible to distinguish from one another: being memorable as a discrete stimulus requires a degree of difference. The ‘maxim’ of ‘unique cues’ is one of the knife edges upon which poetic memory stands, as shall be seen: a poet must write in a familiar enough way to be understood, but novel enough to capture the interest of long-term memory. While the experimental data used comes up to the present day, some important studies (particularly those in Chapter 1) come from the 1960s and 70s, when the so-called cognitive revolution – begun in the 1950s – first began studying language processing in earnest.

Alongside the poetry studied here, I also use the prose writings of Hardy and Frost, and archival materials. In this usage, I reiterate Hardy’s own proviso about his notebook entries: ‘The opinions quoted from these pocket-books and fugitive papers are often to be understood as his passing thoughts only, temporarily jotted there for consideration, and not as permanent conclusions’.¹⁴⁰ Notebooks do not hold decided dictums, but indicate interim conclusions; still, they help reveal how Hardy and Frost thought, hence their necessary inclusion here. Two Frost notebooks of particular significance are that which he kept between 1912-1915 while in England (which I refer to throughout as the England Notebook) and that which I term the Psychological Notebook from c.1911, which contains a 189-strong numbered list of observations, mainly psychological.

The selections of Hardy’s and Frost’s verse used in this thesis do not follow a strict chronological pattern, nor are they limited to a particular period of their respective outputs. Accurately to assess the potency of memory to their poetry as a whole, this thesis requires a range of poems from the length of their respective careers. Due to the prolific output of both writers, it is impossible to discuss every memory-inflected poem; footnoted references refer the reader to related poems.

¹³⁹Daniel Levitin, *This Is Your Brain On Music: Understanding a Human Obsession* (London: Atlantic Books, 2006; repr. 2008), p. 166.

¹⁴⁰*The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, ed. by Michael Millgate (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984), p. 3. Hereafter referred to in the text as *Life* and given with page numbers.

Poems have been chosen on the basis of their best exemplifying a given practice or trend within Hardy's and/or Frost's response to memory. Within each chapter, I endeavour to contextualise my choices historically and within the poet's work as a whole. The importance of the collection in which a given poem appears is also discussed where relevant, remembering Eric Griffith's conclusion that Hardy's *Poems of the Past and the Present* 'means something more than a note of chronological provenance [... they] are poems of the past *and* present because they dramatize the date of their own poeticality in order to weigh the issue between his hopes and his loyalties, his views about love and marriage and his experience of those states'.¹⁴¹ In choosing certain poems and not others I am aware I am enacting my own system of valuation based on the poems' mnemonic potency. This, though, is self-consciously analysed.

My decision regarding the selection of poems is partly motivated by the lack of a developmental curve to either poet's work. Frost reached his creative peak early with his second collection, *North of Boston*.¹⁴² Although his ideas were extended and developed in later work, Frost's output in the early twentieth century demands particular study.¹⁴³ Given that many of his theories about 'the sound of sense' (among other vital ideas which influence much of Frost's work) were written in letters and notebooks in the period 1912-1915, there is a conscious focus on these years. It is worth defining the sound of sense here, in Timothy Steele's apt

¹⁴¹Eric Griffiths, *The Printed Voice of Victorian Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 219 (original emphasis). William W. Morgan also emphasises what is lost when Hardy's poems are read singly, or in an anthology, rather than as 'literary texts available to be read as constituents of an authored book that has a title, an individual history, often an authorial preface, and an organizational logic of its own' ('Aesthetics and Thematics in Hardy's Volumes of Verse: The Example of *Time's Laughingstocks*', in *Thomas Hardy Reappraised: Essays in Honour of Michael Millgate*, ed. by Keith Wilson (Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 2006), pp. 219-44 (p. 219).

¹⁴²Elaine Barry does, however, chart a change in 'the language in which he talked about his poetry [...] from the technical ("tones," "voice-posture," "metrics") to the moral and psychological ("belief," "commitment," "courage," "prowess") and to the linguistic ("meaning," "metaphor," "naming"). His early critical ideas were wholly those of the craftsman; later ideas were those of the philosopher' ('Frost as a Literary Critic', in *Robert Frost on Writing*, ed. by Elaine Barry (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1973), pp. 3-53 (p. 10)).

¹⁴³I am aware that in this, I am aligning with Louise Bogan's notion that with *North of Boston*, Frost achieved 'an insight which he was never quite able to repeat' (*Achievement in American Poetry, 1900-1950* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1951), p. 49). However, my interest in this early period is more for its seeds of poetic theory within Frost rather than the value of individual publications. I take William H. Pritchard's point that *A Witness Tree* 'is compelling evidence that [Frost] wrote poems in his sixties every bit as distinctive, as "wild" as those he had published thirty years before in *North of Boston*' (*Frost: A Literary Life Reconsidered*, p. 239). Indeed, Pritchard makes the case that 'If *North of Boston* reveals the narrative Frost at his best, *A Witness Tree* [...] does the same thing for lyric Frost' (p. 239).

formulation, as ‘tone of voice. It is the power of vocal tone to communicate meaning in addition to or independent of words in their merely definitional function. It is sound that makes sense purely as sound’.¹⁴⁴ In contrast, Hardy’s poetry received much more of his attention towards the end of his career, once he abandoned novel-writing after *Jude the Obscure* (1895). This concentration of artistic effort caused a late development in Hardy’s poetic practice, but it is also significant because his consideration of memory was effected by a climactic life event. The death of Hardy’s first wife, Emma, in 1912, gave rise to a sequence of poems entrenched in memory, the ‘Poems of 1912-1913’. Far from a simplistic account of Hardy’s and Frost’s chronological development, this thesis needs to consider when memory becomes a pressing concern and why.

The bulk of Hardy criticism concerns the novels, though like everyone working on Hardy’s poetry, I am indebted to the magisterial scholarship of Dennis Taylor, who not only details Hardy’s metrical inventiveness, but contextualises his work within the prosodic debates of the day. Within Hardy poetry criticism, one consistent problem is the selection of poems studied. Much critical endeavour has been reserved for the ‘Poems of 1912-13’. Even with the addition of a few others considered comparably great, this does little to account for Hardy’s more than one thousand poems.¹⁴⁵ The debate in the 1960s, spearheaded by Philip Larkin, over the ‘problem’ of the vast oeuvre went some way to changing attitudes and practice, but many critics are still embarrassed by Hardy’s weaker efforts.¹⁴⁶ This study embraces a wider catalogue of poems partly to show the prevalence of memory as a theme, but also to discover when and why mnemonic ventures in form fall flat.

Although both poets have a lifelong commitment to writing poetry of memory, there is a marked shift in Frost’s poetry towards the end of his life. His final collection, *In the Clearing* (1962), self-consciously courts a national audience

¹⁴⁴Timothy Steele, “‘Across Spaces of the Footed Line’: The Meter and Versification of Robert Frost”, in *The Cambridge Companion to Robert Frost*, ed. by Robert Faggen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 123-153 (pp. 142-43). As a point of comparison, see S. C. Neuman’s essay on Hardy’s phrase ‘emotion put into measure’, which argues that Hardy ‘was insisting that we take his definition literally, that we treat “measure”, not as *echoing* sense, but as *having* sense’ (“‘Emotion Put into Measure’: Meaning in Hardy’s Poetry”, in *The Poetry of Thomas Hardy*, eds. by Patricia Clements and Juliet Grindle (London: Vision, 1980), pp. 33-51 (p. 34, original emphasis)).

¹⁴⁵This trend is beginning to change, with works such as Indy Clark’s *Thomas Hardy’s Pastoral: An Unkindly May* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) purposely avoiding the ‘Poems of 1912-1913’ in favour of Hardy’s other poems.

¹⁴⁶See Philip Larkin’s 1966 piece, ‘Wanted: Good Hardy Critic’ in *Required Writing*, pp. 168-174.

and adopts a much more confident voice to secure American public memory than he does in earlier poems. This engagement with memory is so different from Frost's other memory poems that I leave this collection aside.

While the thesis as a whole embraces both the cognitive and the cultural, particular chapter sections may give more weight to one side than the other; however, this project insists that both attributes need considering for poetry's mnemonics to be understood. Furthermore, there is an overall movement from an early focus on the minutiae of verse, and how reading line by line recruits short-term memory, to embrace more long-term cultural legacies. Each chapter establishes a scientific background for the particularly topic discussed, in order to relate Hardy's and Frost's poetry to known features of human memory. The emboldened words indicate the overarching concepts where I see Hardy and Frost as meeting in their interests in, and practices of, memory. Chapter 1, 'The Evolution of **Expectation**: Modelling Mnemonic Forms', begins by considering how expectancy patterns have evolved within verse. The traditional metrics characteristic of both Hardy and Frost here come under scrutiny, as I uncover the mnemonic merits of avoiding the burgeoning modernist practices of their colleagues. The specific devices of lineation, rhyme and metre are each looked at in turn, for their cognitive, as well as creative, capabilities. Chapter 2 then looks at a specific strand of memory in 'Seeing it again: **Recognition** and recognition memory'. Here questions of memory and epistemology are raised with regard to how and when remembering is akin to knowing. Focusing on the unique nature of Hardy's belatedness and Frostian 'somethings', this chapter sees the failure to deliver memories to the reader wholesale as well as a deliberate holding back. It asks why both poets often choose to recognise indeterminacy, as well as their purposeful forging of connections which do not naturally exist. Chapter 3 is entitled 'Hearing Sounds Past: The Importance of Being **Voiced**' and examines the perhaps unexpected phenomenon of Hardy's and Frost's insistence on speech – the most ephemeral of traces. It positions both writers as handing on legacies from oral culture, particularly those nurtured by local communities. The ballad and the dramatic monologue forms receive particular investigation, alongside Frost's insistence on the ear as the organ of reading poetry. Chapter 4, 'Remembering a self: Memory for Posthumous **Identity** in Poetry', reveals how poetry can be used to capture a person's personality and how one can counter the loss of a person. It focuses particularly on the creation of versified narratives to foster the continued

remembrance of a given individual. Hardy in particular charges memory to do both prospective and reconstructive work as he seeks to assert individual identity after death, rather than during life. Theories of the self-concept and autobiographical memory elucidate the cultural inflections of both individual memory and memory for other individuals. Finally, the conclusion reopens the question of locality, enquiring into why an emphasis on the regional might aid the remembrance of Hardy's and Frost's respective work.

CHAPTER 1 –

The Evolution of Expectation: Modelling Mnemonic Forms

‘The main effectual difference between the rhythms of the old metrical verse & of fine prose is that in the verse you have a greater expectancy of the rhythm & the poet’s art was to vary the expected rhythm as much as he could without disagreeably baulking the expectation.’

– Robert Bridges

The above quotation was copied out by Thomas Hardy, with his own underlining of ‘expectancy’.¹⁴⁷ Published on both sides of the Atlantic in November 1922 by England’s Poet Laureate, Robert Bridges, ‘Humdrum and Harum-Scarum: A Lecture on Free Verse’ carried cultural weight.¹⁴⁸ Hardy wrote to Bridges immediately that he had ‘read your article in this month’s *Mercury*, & found it *excellent*. I hope it will tend to save our young poets from the woeful fogs of free verse worship’.¹⁴⁹ Though no supporter of free verse, it is notable that the issue of ‘expectancy’ is the one which, of the whole article, Hardy chooses to record: he agrees with Bridges that verse is an art of balancing expectations. Following Hardy’s excerpted text, Bridges asserts that ‘This expectancy appears in the critical attitude of the hearer towards the more irregular verses of a poem’: expectation is a fundamental part of the reader’s experience of a poem.¹⁵⁰ Indeed, ‘expectancy’ characterises verse for Bridges and a free versifier ‘may repudiate expectancy and say that it is one of the things that he wishes to be rid of’.¹⁵¹ Expectation is explicitly about memory, since it involves anticipating a remembered state of affairs, crucial to the reading process. William James defines memory as ‘the association of a present image with others known to belong to the past. *Expectation* the same, with future substituted for past’.¹⁵² As shall be shown, though, neither expectation nor memory can reliably allow one to ‘know’ the future, particularly within a poem.

¹⁴⁷*The Personal Notebooks of Thomas Hardy*, ed. by Richard H. Taylor (London: Macmillan, 1978), pp. 62-63 (original emphasis).

¹⁴⁸*The London Mercury* and *The North American Review* respectively.

¹⁴⁹6.165, original emphasis. Frost also met Robert Bridges (see *LRF1*, p. 152; p. 154; p. 167).

¹⁵⁰Robert Bridges, ‘A Paper on Free Verse’, *The North American Review*, 216.804 (1922): 647-58 (p. 649).

¹⁵¹Bridges, ‘A Paper on Free Verse’, p. 654.

¹⁵²*Principles*, pp. 563-64 (original emphasis).

In this chapter, I am less concerned with the stand-off between free verse and traditional metrics than how this disagreement is couched in terms of expectation. Behind this paradigmatic moment in poetic history stands the question of how expectation is at work in poetry, and how much expectation is too much. Recent studies of prosody at this time problematise the ‘convenient narrative of the rise of free verse’ by reappraising Bridges’s influence and revealing ‘the contested landscape of the Edwardian Georgian prosody wars’.¹⁵³ This chapter builds upon that project by setting Hardy’s and Frost’s own use of poetic expectation within contemporary poetic debate.

The impulse of the Free Verse movement, according to Bridges, ‘is admitted to be a widespread conviction that the old metrical forms and prosodies are exhausted’, suggesting that those poets still using them were harking back to the past.¹⁵⁴ No sooner does Bridges introduce his topic than he notes ‘the term Free Verse implies that it is with form that we have to deal, and not with content’.¹⁵⁵ This division between form and content becomes an important schism in the poetry of Hardy’s and Frost’s contemporaries. While not a modernist, Hardy struggled an insistence on form above all.¹⁵⁶ In 1895, Hardy noted one (unwanted) tendency within contemporary poetry: ‘nothing in many modern writers but *form* – good form, certainly. I am led to say this by having tried to discover a great poet in Robert Bridges’.¹⁵⁷ In 1898, Hardy anticipated poor reviews for *Wessex Poems* because ‘in the full tide of a fashion which seems to view poetry as the art of saying nothing with mellifluous preciousness, the principle of regarding form as second to content is not likely to be popular’ (2.208). Critical fashions ensured that there were contemporary expectations for poetry as a genre, ones to which Hardy did not conform. Frost, too, found Bridges’ obsession with form problematic, disparaging him with ‘I don’t know any single poet who knows any prosody, except always Robert Bridges’.¹⁵⁸ At

¹⁵³Meredith Martin, *Rise and Fall*, p. 80.

¹⁵⁴Bridges, ‘A Paper on Free Verse’, p. 647.

¹⁵⁵Bridges, ‘A Paper on Free Verse’, p. 647.

¹⁵⁶‘Modernist’ is used in this chapter as a shorthand to refer to writing style of those poets such as Pound and Eliot who turned to free verse in the early twentieth century, and who have subsequently been deemed by literary scholars to characterise modernism.

¹⁵⁷2.84-85, original emphasis. For a full and less biased assessment of Robert Bridges, see Martin’s *The Rise and Fall*, since Bridges is ‘the book’s protagonist’ (p. 11).

¹⁵⁸*LRF1*, p. 599. This comment was occasioned by Frost’s chagrin at his daughter Lesley’s college education, since ‘Prosody! I was hoping the mere word might be kept from Lesley as long as possible’ (*LRF1*, p. 599). Frost’s dislike of Bridges’ championing theories of quantitative metre is borne out forcefully in further letters (see *LRF1*, pp. 167-68; p. 192). Elaine Barry also notes Frost’s

both ends of the versification spectrum stands a preoccupation with form: either changing it too radically (for Hardy's and Frost's taste), or adhering to it too slavishly (like Bridges).

Bridges' article mentions poet 'Flint' by name, in referring to the changes wrought in poetry over the previous nine years.¹⁵⁹ In the March 1913 issue of *Poetry* magazine, F. S. Flint published a statement on 'Imagisme', 'largely based on an interview with Pound', which heralded the beginning of a new era in poetry (since Imagism would be later subsumed into the category of modernism).¹⁶⁰ Flint reports three rules, where the third is 'regarding rhythm: to compose in sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome'.¹⁶¹ This is a thinly veiled attack on metrical schemes as a staid method of composing poems; in this account Imagism becomes synonymous with free verse. With the rise of free verse, such poetic conventions as metre and rhyme were sidelined in favour of a perceived expressive freedom: long-appreciated forms became seen as lesser efforts, too artificial to afford true expression, and thus devalued. In the wake of a changed and changing world, poetic tastes similarly shifted.

Although the Imagists are the more famous group, another contemporary poetic movement was redefining poetry in a different way at this time: the Georgian poets.¹⁶² In 1912, *Georgian Poetry 1911-1912* (the first of what would become five anthologies) was published. This verse looks much more traditional than Imagist offerings, having as it does regular metres and focusing on rural scenes. Editor Edward Marsh's grandiose claim for the first anthology was that it marked 'the beginning of another "Georgian period" which may take rank in due time with the several great poetic ages of the past', even if for modern readers this is incomprehensible.¹⁶³ Like the poets forging modernism, the Georgians also sought to

scepticism for 'Bridges' syllabic theory of metrics' and reproduces a less than complimentary 'marginal comment beside a poem of Bridges' in the 1913 issue of *Poetry and Drama* (Barry, 'Frost as a Literary Critic', p. 38). Tim Kendall claims that having heard Bridges 'holding forth on the virtues of quantitative meter' Frost 'was inspired to formulate his "sound of sense" as a rebuttal' (*The Art of Robert Frost* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012), p.10).

¹⁵⁹Bridges also quotes Flint's *Otherworld: Cadences* (1920).

¹⁶⁰Abel Debritto, 'Snapshots of Reality – An Introduction to Imagism', *The Modernist Journals Project*, Brown University and The University of Tulsa <www.modjourn.org/> [accessed 29 November 2016].

¹⁶¹F. S. Flint, 'Imagisme', *Poetry*, ed. by Harriet Monroe. 1:6 (1913): 198-200 (p. 199).

¹⁶²Bridges' article appeared in 1922, the year of publication of the final Georgian anthology.

¹⁶³Edward Marsh, 'Prefatory note', in *Georgian Poetry 1911-1912*, ed. by Edward Marsh (London: The Poetry Bookshop, 1912), in *Project Gutenberg* <<https://www.gutenberg.org/>> [accessed 7 January 2013]. Hardy refuted the movement's moniker: in a letter to Florence Henniker he comments

be new. Indeed, Marsh excluded some poets from the second anthology because ‘they belong in fact to an earlier poetic generation, and their [original] inclusion must be allowed to have been an anachronism’.¹⁶⁴ Even within this now-considered conservative group, there is an anxiety about accurately representing the contemporary moment.

As Robert H. Ross points out, the popularity of the Georgian movement was at its fullest 1912-1915, for the first two anthologies, but quickly dwindled, since ‘that ambitious adjective “Georgian” had been applied proudly by Marsh in 1912 to mean “new”, “modern”, “energetic”, but by 1922 it had come to connote only “old-fashioned”, “outworn”, or worse’.¹⁶⁵ Ross notes the colloquial diction of the Georgians as a prevailing characteristic and their indebtedness to Wordsworth’s ‘Preface’. Although it may not have particularly retained its status as a new movement (even seen within the historical context), Georgianism must be recognised as a(nother) conscious attempt to establish a new kind of poetry at this time.¹⁶⁶ Ross delineates the Georgians supposed novelty as

to be anti-Victorian, to write poetry which, in tone, form, and diction, was free of both *fin de siècle* weariness and Victorian ‘painted adjectives’. But above all, Georgianism in 1912-15 was synonymous with realism [... which] came to mean the inclusion in poetry of details, however nasty, which presumably possessed truth to reality as it was perceived by the five senses.¹⁶⁷

Both poets were linked with the Georgians, Frost a part of their social circle and Hardy the dedicatee of their fourth anthology, *Georgian Poetry 1918-1919*.¹⁶⁸ Although they show similarities with them (Chapter 4 compares John Masefield’s

‘I imagine you mean the “Georgians” (an absurd name, as if the Georgians were not Shelley, Scott, Byron, &c.)’ (5.215).

¹⁶⁴Edward Marsh, ‘Prefatory note’, in *Georgian Poetry 1913-1915*, ed. by Edward Marsh (London: The Poetry Bookshop, 1915), in *Project Gutenberg* <<https://gutenberg.org/>> [accessed 3 March 2013].

¹⁶⁵Robert H. Ross, *The Georgian Revolt: Rise and Fall of a Poetic Ideal, 1910-22* (London: Faber, 1967), pp. 254-55.

¹⁶⁶Seán Street is much more disparaging, claiming that Marsh ‘simply proved what he had set out to do: that there was a popular audience prepared to buy and read poetry, that recent writing had lost touch with its audience, and was of little interest to any but scholars, and that the average potential reader, like himself, was more interested in short “human interest” lyrical poems than complex syntax and deep theories of literature and art’ (*The Dymock Poets* (Brigend: Seren, 1998), p. 47).

¹⁶⁷Ross, *The Georgian Revolt*, pp. 145-46.

¹⁶⁸However, the same charges Hardy levelled at Bridges in the late 1890s were brought back for the Georgians, whom Hardy thought ‘on a wrong track. They seem to forget that poetry must have symmetry in its form, & meaning in its content’ (5.215).

‘Biography’ with Hardy’s ‘Afterwards’), Hardy and Frost have outlasted the now-obscure Georgians in critical and public popularity.¹⁶⁹ Much of the poetry in the first anthology obeys its structure so obediently as to sound twee – ‘Stands the Church clock at ten to three? | And is there honey still for tea?’.¹⁷⁰ That example may be too easy a target, but even a contemporary reviewer notes the

visible and astonishing excellence of Mr Hardy’s later poems. Beside these, the gems of a Georgian anthology are manifestly paste. They have no substance. You feel that a brass pin applied to the back of them would be enough to destroy their glitter for ever. On Mr Hardy’s poems the keenest and most toughened knife blade would break.¹⁷¹

An imaginative rather than incisive judgement, this still shows that even in 1919, Hardy’s were felt to be the more lasting works, for their ‘substance’. This chapter shows this ‘substance’ to be created by engaging with expectations yet innovating versification to create memorable poetry. A later commentator notes that Hardy’s “‘Moments of Vision”, which appeared in 1917 – the central year of the Georgian Poetry series – tackles and defeats most of Sir Edward Marsh’s candidates on their own ground’.¹⁷²

At this precise historical moment, the nature of poetry was being debated and some of its most recognisable characteristics were on the wane; indeed, as the introduction showed, Meredith Martin calls 1860-1930 ‘a crucial epoch’ in the history of English literature, in relation to metre.¹⁷³ How, then, stand Hardy and Frost, writing and publishing poetry within this context, stubbornly endorsing certain forms? Hardy’s ‘Poems of 1912-13’ make use of a variety of metrical and rhyme schemes; Frost’s 1913 collection *North of Boston*, for all its innovations, has thirteen out of sixteen poems largely penned in iambic pentameter (and two of the remaining

¹⁶⁹Not everybody saw it so: Horace Gregory declared Frost a minor poet in a 1936 edition of *The New Republic* and that Frost was ‘the last survivor of the “Georgian movement,” [...] who refused to carry an unwelcome load of social responsibility’ (qtd. in Peter Stanlis, ‘Rehabilitating Robert Frost: The Unity of his Literary, Cultural, and Political Thought’, *The Imaginative Conservative*, 2 April 2012 <<http://www.theimaginativeconservative.org/2012/04/rehabilitating-robert-frost-unity-of.html>> [accessed 4 December 2016]. Samuel Hynes also considers Frost ‘the best of the Georgians rather than the best of the New Englanders’, and means it as a compliment (‘The Hardy Tradition’, p. 51).

¹⁷⁰This is from Rupert Brooke’s ‘The Old Vicarage, Grantchester’.

¹⁷¹‘Modern Poetry and Modern Society’, *The Athenaeum* 16 May 1919, review of *Georgian Poetry: 1911-1912*, ed. by Edward Marsh, rpt. in *Georgian Poetry 1911-1922: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Timothy Rogers (London; Henley; Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), pp. 216-221 (p. 220).

¹⁷²Alan Pryce-Jones, ‘The Georgian Poets’, in *Georgian Poetry 1911-1922: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Timothy Rogers (London; Henley; Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977) pp. 353-61 (p. 356).

¹⁷³Martin, *The Rise and Fall of Meter*, p. 1.

three have a different regular structure). These two literary figures became, and have endured as, dominant poets, even as the shift away from the accentual-syllabic tradition irrevocably changed the way poetry was viewed. This chapter explores the formal properties of poetry in terms of expectations and memorability, in order to reconsider how Hardy and Frost wrote, as well as why and how these choices bear on their reputation.

Having introduced the poetic landscape of the time as a spectrum of expectation, with experimental modernism at one extreme and the Georgians at the other, this chapter explores how expectations affect the reading of Hardy's and Frost's poems. Firstly, it looks at cultural influences in terms of social bias and explores literary-historical and psychological notions of poetic expectation. This is contextualised with Hardy's readings in prosodic theory. Hardy takes on more prominence as he copied specific passages from the contemporary theorists who provided the backdrop of metrical thinking which would influence Frost in his (poetically) formative years.¹⁷⁴ Those intrinsic features of poetry which create local-level expectancy patterns (lineation, rhyme and metre) are then each examined to reveal their particular expectancy effects. Turning outwards again to Hardy's and Frost's contemporary poetic culture, I consider anti-metrical modernism, to conclude why Hardy's and Frost's particular balance of expectancy patterns might be mnemonically advantageous. Scholars of prosody have proved the importance of metre for individual will or national feeling: here I uncover what metre means for memory.¹⁷⁵

A culture of poetic expectations

‘What can the dawning science of psychology tell us about poetry?’
– I. A. Richards¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴This is in no way to suggest either that Hardy was the more competent versifier or that Frost was not well-read. Frost's letters show him debating scansion and referring to contemporary theories (such as *LRF2*, p. 380, where Frost scans a line of his poem ‘Maple’ and mentions ‘Charlie Cobb’s theory of tetrameters’ (Charles W. Cobb who, as Richardson’s notes make clear, had published three articles on metrics across literary journals)). For Frost’s versification see, among others, Timothy Steele, “‘Across Spaces of the Footed Line’: The Meter and Versification of Robert Frost”, pp. 123-153 and Tim Kendall’s *The Art of Robert Frost* (2012) for readings of individual poems.

¹⁷⁵I refer to Matthew Campbell’s *Rhythm and Will* (1999) and Meredith Martin’s *The Rise and Fall of Meter* (2012).

¹⁷⁶I. A. Richards, *Poetries and Sciences*, rpt. of *Science and Poetry* (1926) (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), p. 46. Richards takes Hardy as an example towards the end. Furthermore, there is

What is expected of a poem depends on the individual reader, who comes to the work with all of her/his individual preferences, cultural background, socio-economic status and peculiar education. Discussing expectations that are held about poetry goes some way to asking the question ‘What is poetry?’. Speaking in general terms about what poetry is has forever been tantalising, and unhelpful. A few tenets might be established: it is short(er than prose); it is read more slowly than prose; due to the blank space around a poem, the reader attends to word placement; and, the sound(s) of each word individually, as well as in sequence, matters. I analyse Hardy and Frost as figures whose poetry has been granted access to cultural memory at large, a freighting which ties certain qualities to their poetic memory, some of which are separate from the poetry itself.

In 2012, psychologists Bar-Hillel and colleagues tested ‘how expectations affect cultural experiences’, using poetry as their medium. Testing how expectations affect one physiologically has long been of interest, but here they look for expectations’ ‘effect on the mind’.¹⁷⁷ Focusing on reputation bias, they saw whether readers could determine work of high standing (from invented, ‘bogus’ poems) when the poet’s name was removed. Further experiments then tested if a poet’s reputation made a difference to readers’ ratings of the poem. Each time, this pulled ‘the evaluations in the direction of the expectations set up by the name’.¹⁷⁸ There are questionable elements of such an experiment: monetary motivations for participation and embedding a poem in a questionnaire may both have led to faster, goal-oriented readings of the poetry – the experiment creates non-naturalistic reading conditions.¹⁷⁹ Before one even queries testing the ability to recognise ‘good’ over ‘bad’ poetry, it bears saying that poetry is not read to find out if it is ‘total rubbish [...or] totally wonderful’.¹⁸⁰ Nevertheless, this paper shows that cultural expectations are deeply embedded within the informed reading experience. The temptation to like what is known to have been liked plays a large role, but only if one first has the

a precedent to reading I. A. Richards alongside Frost, since Faggen quotes from *Science and Poetry* in his Frost criticism (*Challenge*, pp. 50-51).

¹⁷⁷Maya Bar-Hillel, Alon Maharshak, Avital Moshinsky and Ruth Nofech, ‘A Rose by Any Other Name: A Social-Cognitive Perspective on Poets and Poetry’, *Judgment and Decision Making*, 7.2 (2012): 149-64 (p. 150).

¹⁷⁸Bar-Hillel, Maharshak, Moshinsky and Nofech, ‘A Rose by Any Other Name’, pp. 161-62.

¹⁷⁹The methods of the three studies all emphasise the speed with which this is carried out (Bar-Hillel, Maharshak, Moshinsky and Nofech, ‘A Rose by Any Other Name’, p. 151, p. 153, p. 155, p. 157).

¹⁸⁰Bar-Hillel, Maharshak, Moshinsky and Nofech, ‘A Rose by Any Other Name’, p. 155.

poems attributed to a ‘good’ writer.¹⁸¹ This confirms that some expectations are extrinsic to any given poem; a certain cultural conditioning colours the way a reader prepares to receive it.

In giving participants poems blind and removing the context which surrounds the poem’s name, Bar-Hillel and colleagues emulate the work of I. A. Richards and his early forays into practical criticism.¹⁸² Richards, aiming for greater analytical objectivity, gave readers poems without the labels of their respective poets. The later experiments of Bar-Hillel and colleagues tested the opposite: seeing what difference knowledge of reputation made on participant responses and looking for the ‘Emperor’s New Clothes effect (ENC)’; thus, the creation of literary judgements could be seen from both angles, from ignorance and from knowledge.¹⁸³ From the breadth of cultural contexts (such as a poet’s reputation and social self-consciousness), down to the New Critical focus upon a single poem on a page, the expectations held about poetry are seen to influence the reading of a poem. Worse, there is the possibility that expectations might thwart a reading to produce a forced reaction, or to decrease the enjoyment of a poem. What cannot be attained, studies suggest, is neutrality: the reader always processes a poem with reference to certain expectations.

This adaptation to one’s reading material was also noticed by Frost, who wrote that ‘the way to read a poem in prose or verse is in the light of all the other poems ever written’ (*CPRF* 165). He describes how the poet’s own expectations might be formed, comparing the poet’s germination to the violent climatological phenomenon of the waterspout at sea:

He has to begin as a cloud of all the other poets he ever read. That can’t be helped. And first the cloud reaches down toward the water from above and then the water reaches up toward the cloud from below and finally cloud and water join together to roll as one pillar between heaven and earth. The

¹⁸¹I am indebted to Prof. John Gabrieli for pointing out research to me concerning how social desirability is affecting decision-making in the digital age. In *Science Magazine* Muchnik and colleagues looked at how ‘social news aggregation websites’ (such as Yelp) affect judgements. Their findings suggest that ‘social influence substantially biases rating dynamics in systems designed to harness collective intelligence’ (Lev Muchnik, Sinan Aral and Sean J. Taylor, ‘Social Influence Bias: A Randomized Experiment’, *Science*, 341.6146 (2013): 647-51 (p. 650)): expectations borne of collective culture influence everyday decision-making.

¹⁸²Richards is discussed in full on page pp. 61-62: here I just use practical criticism as a comparative method of reading.

¹⁸³Bar-Hillel, Maharshak, Moshinsky and Nofech, ‘A Rose by Any Other Name’, p. 154.

base of water he picks up from below is of course all the life he ever lived
outside books.

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This visualisation turns the professional poet into a vertical force with which to reckon, but this only exists as a result of two horizontal reservoirs which influence him.¹⁸⁴ One is his reading, a type of literary memory which makes his style to some extent familiar; the other is experience, which gives him cultural familiarity yet ensures his individuality. With its 'heaven and earth' grandiose overtones of a Biblical creation, Frost's description is also unstoppable, using the cumulative conjunction 'and' over the temperance of punctuation.

In 1942, literary critic M. H. Abrams considered unconscious expectations: how people read and whether or not pre-conceived ideas about poetry influence the reading experience. Each reader, he argues, comes to a poem with 'an intricate set of expectations and prepared reactions'; Abrams's is a paper which invites comment from psychology, but itself shies away from science.¹⁸⁵ The preparedness of the reader is not in itself negative: the problem is when one becomes 'habituated to but a single type of versification'.¹⁸⁶ This expectation is individualistic and born of literary expectation, rather than Bar-Hillel's social and extra-literary expectations. Abrams provides a detailed study of Samuel Johnson's attenuation to Pope's metrics, Pope's couplets being for Johnson 'the nonpareil of measures, and the ultimate reach of poetic development'.¹⁸⁷ Johnson's expectations of the heroic couplet, therefore, informed his reading of 'all stanza forms, and blank verse as well, single line by single line, seeking always to make each line a complete metrical entity'.¹⁸⁸ In this way, Johnson's disregard for certain other poets can be attributed to metre: his disdain for 'Milton, or Collins, or Gray, was because their numbers clashed sharply

¹⁸⁴For the remainder of this paragraph I adopt Frost's pronoun for the sake of ease. Mark Richardson sees that 'A Boy's Will is exactly such a record of Frost's negotiations with his predecessors [...] Frost carries something down from the cloud of all those other poets while drawing up something of his life lived outside books. This movement was made complete in North of Boston' (*The Ordeal of Robert Frost: The Poet and His Poetics* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), pp. 108-09).

¹⁸⁵M. H. Abrams, 'Unconscious Expectations in the Reading of Poetry', *English Literary History*, 9.4 (1942): 235-244 (p. 235).

¹⁸⁶Abrams, 'Unconscious Expectations', p. 239.

¹⁸⁷Abrams, 'Unconscious Expectations', p. 240.

¹⁸⁸Abrams, 'Unconscious Expectations', p. 240.

with the reading skills, the anticipations and accustomed reactions, which had been formed mainly on the numbers of Dryden and of Pope'.¹⁸⁹

Part of what Abrams describes is the effect of cultural and historical change: with successive generations come alterations in taste. That which was valued by a world aspiring to rational order, such as Johnson's, did not suit two centuries later. Regardless of the preferred poetic model, Abrams shows there is always a template for these subconscious expectations. However, his concern is not just with maintaining critical detachment in literary judgements, but preserving the reader's possibility for enjoyment, lest s/he becomes 'unadaptive to any but a limited range of poetry'.¹⁹⁰ Vocabulary like 'habituate' and 'unadaptive' bestows an air of the scientific upon Abrams's discoveries, but he expands on a cultural phenomenon observed separately from psychological experimentation.¹⁹¹ Although the noun 'habituation' has existed since 1449, it is only since 1816 that it has a secondary meaning relating to stimulus-response.¹⁹² This specific meaning is localised to the sciences, despite the wider audience observing habituation at work. Habituation is essentially habit formation, which has overtones of mnemonic processes already, since habits require repetition and contextual exposure. Either unwilling to state it explicitly, or unconsciously registering it, Abrams's own language highlights the scientific.

Habituation is one form of expectation, and one of which both Hardy and Frost were aware. As part of his assiduous note-taking from Maudsley's *Natural Causes*, Hardy taught himself that 'Habit is acquired faculty, wh. means function-made structure – structural knowledge [...] & therefore the automatic & easy performance of acts wh. were performed at first only wh. conscious labour'.¹⁹³ Similarly, Frost would read in James's *Principles* that '*habit diminishes the conscious attention with which our acts are performed*', because a chain of events becomes associated by successive presentations that the first item eventually

¹⁸⁹ Abrams, 'Unconscious Expectations', pp. 239-40. Abrams also cites a contemporary example of too narrow an attenuation in John Crowe Ransom's propensity 'to read poetry through criteria and anticipations shaped by the practice of Donne' (p. 243).

¹⁹⁰ Abrams, 'Unconscious Expectations', p. 244.

¹⁹¹ Another suggestive lexical choice is 'adaptive', part of the vocabulary of evolution, the scientific subject of the Victorian Age.

¹⁹² 'Habituation, n.', OED.

¹⁹³ Qtd. in *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy: Volume 1*, ed. by Lennart A. Björk (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985), p. 197. Hereafter referred to in the text as *LNTH1* with page numbers.

produces the whole chain.¹⁹⁴ In James's realistic metaphor, 'A glance at the musical hieroglyphics, and the pianist's fingers have rippled through a cataract of notes'.¹⁹⁵ Both poets were conversant with psychological discoveries concerning habit formation, and reading itself as subject to the same kind of habits.

The issue of expectation has been, and continues to be, a feature of discussions about poetry. Given the poetic climate in 1912, it is notable that Hardy departs from his usual practice, and literary tradition, in 'The Voice'. A year before Flint's article on 'Imagisme', Hardy penned this achievement in form and one of his more memorable works. Donald Davie notes it is 'to my mind rightly, applauded as one of Hardy's greatest poems'.¹⁹⁶ This has to be attributed – at least in part – to the last stanza's changed form (see below), the 'exquisite modulation into the last stanza'.¹⁹⁷ What has not been commented on, though, is the interplay between Hardy's poem and the psychological processes of memory and attention, both of which serve to make 'The Voice' unforgettable. In order to provide a psychologically-informed reading of the poem, three areas of commentary (scientific theory, literary criticism and Romantic poetic thinking) allow a summation of what has been discussed so far.

The strong metre is a distinguishing feature of 'The Voice', since at twelve syllables, these lines are longer than much English verse. However, most noticeable is the change from the pattern set up in stanzas 1-3, to the impoverished last stanza. Just as Hardy writes of disappearances and memories displacing the present, so does the verse shrink and the speaker question reality:

Woman much missed, how you call to me, call to me,
Saying that now you are not as you were
When you had changed from the one who was all to me,
But as at first, when our day was fair.

¹⁹⁴William James, *Principles of Psychology*, p. 119 (original emphasis). James also writes of anticipation in his 'Association' chapter, that 'a sequence of outer impressions [...] will the next time be *anticipated*' (p. 532, original emphasis).

¹⁹⁵William James, *Principles of Psychology*, p. 119. Using much the same example, Hardy noted a detailed description of reflex arcs by Caleb Saleeby in a 1904 edition of *Academy*. Writing on the relationship between will and reflex actions, (and offering information about 'sensory nerve fibre[s] [...] muscular tissues', Saleeby determines that 'Whilst will emerges from reflex action, to reflex action will can return ... e.g. piano playing' (qtd. in *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy: Volume 2*, ed. by Lennart A. Björk (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985), p. 174. Hereafter referred to in the text as *LNTH2*, with page numbers).

¹⁹⁶Donald Davie, *Thomas Hardy and British Poetry* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 25.

¹⁹⁷F. R. Leavis, *New Bearings in English Poetry: A Study in Contemporary Poetry* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 60.

Can it be you that I hear? Let me view you, then,
 Standing as when I drew near to the town
 Where you would wait for me: yes, as I knew you then,
 Even to the original air-blue gown!

Or is it only the breeze, in its listlessness
 Travelling across the wet mead to me here,
 You being ever dissolved to wan wistlessness,
 Heard no more again far or near?

Thus I; faltering forward,
 Leaves around me falling,
 Wind oozing thin through the thorn from norward,
 And the woman calling. 346

Much like the wind, the last verse thins out to something sparse, less tangible and comforting than before. It is further broken by the initial caesura and the consecutive end-stops, as compared with the earlier enjambed long lines. The reader's feeling of displacement is magnified if literary memory is brought into consideration, for the metre on which Hardy opens is not his own but one from poetic heritage. Horace's Ode 2.14 is the metrical source for 'The Voice', with Hardy displaying his Classical education. For a few readers, this would make 'The Voice' more shocking, and thus memorable, when it breaks pattern, but most readers experience Hardy's own game of metrical memory as he constructs and deconstructs this particular form. Critics also link 'The Voice' with other well-known poems. Griffiths sees that "'The Voice' rewrites [Browning's] 'Two in the Campagna'" and that 'Hardy re-thinks and re-sounds the earlier poem's questions about the entirety of human satisfaction'.¹⁹⁸ McDonald shows how Hardy's 'template adapts and alters' that of Swinburne's 'At Parting', not only the 'formal movement and rhyming' but an 'overall indebtedness' to the earlier poem.¹⁹⁹ Hardy's engagement with and disruption of literary tradition is blatant on the page and further exacerbated by the consideration of his literary sources.

¹⁹⁸Griffiths, *Printed Voice*, p. 236 (see also p. 235). Matthew Campbell pairs 'Two in the Campagna' instead with Hardy's 'At Castle Boterel' (*Rhythm and Will*, p. 236).

¹⁹⁹Peter McDonald, *Sound Intentions: The Workings of Rhyme in Nineteenth-Century Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 333-34

Dennis Taylor has outlined Hardy's reading of, and response to, contemporary prosodic theory, especially Coventry Patmore's 'landmark article' of 1857.²⁰⁰ In reviewing contemporary works on English prosody, Patmore argues that English metre is distinguished for 'marking, *by whatever means*, certain isochronous intervals'.²⁰¹ Hardy copied this out, alongside the 'two indispensable conditions of metre [...] that the sequence of vocal utterance [...] shall be divided into equal or proportionate spaces [...] *that the fact of that division shall be made manifest* by an "ictus" or "beat"'.²⁰² As Taylor notes, Hardy did not copy the following sentence which allows that metre '*has no material and external existence at all*, but has its place in the mind, which craves measure in everything'.²⁰³ This chapter considers the cognitive principles behind metre, but it is important that Victorian prosodists were aware of this 'craving'.²⁰⁴

Hardy further gleaned from Patmore that 'the finest specimens of versification' show 'a perpetual conflict between the law of the verse and the freedom of the language, and each is [...] violated for the purpose of giving effect to the other'.²⁰⁵ These clashing agendas allow a greater reading experience not in spite of, but because of poetry's formal properties. Patmore wrote to Hardy in praise of *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, and underneath this anecdote Hardy says of his own prose style, that he carries into it 'the knowledge I have acquired in poetry – that inexact rhymes and rhythms now and then are far more pleasing than correct ones' (*Life* 108), a Patmore-inflected idea itself, since Patmore's essay ends by noting that "smoothness" [...] is about the lowest and most easily attainable of all

²⁰⁰Taylor, *Hardy's Metres*, p. 4, p. 22. See Taylor, *Hardy's Metres*, pp. 14-33 for an overview of Hardy's reading in prosodic theory. Yopie Prins's 'Victorian meters' provides a compact overview of contemporary ideas in prosody (in *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Poetry*, ed. by Joseph Bristow (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 89-113).

²⁰¹Coventry Patmore, 'English Metrical Critics', *The North British Review*, 27. 53 (1857): 127-61 (p. 136, original emphasis).

²⁰²Patmore, 'English Metrical Critics', p. 136 (original emphasis); see Hardy's note-taking at *LNTH2*, p. 191.

²⁰³Patmore, 'English Metrical Critics', p. 136 (original emphasis); Taylor, *Hardy's Metres*, p. 22-23. For a consideration of whether Patmore – and Taylor's reading of Patmore – takes the idea of metre's mental presence too far, see Jason David Hall, 'Materializing Meter: Physiology Psychology, Prosody', *Victorian Poetry*, 49.2 (2011): 179-97.

²⁰⁴It would require a whole book to delineate all of Hardy's reading in prosody, and Dennis Taylor's *Hardy's Metres and Victorian Prosody* (1988) has already done it. However, I do not mention here the work of George Saintsbury (from whom Hardy also copied copious phrases) and the Hardy's *Literary Notebooks* evidence his note-taking from nearly everything he could lay his hands on regarding poetic metre.

²⁰⁵Patmore, 'English Metrical Critics', p. 131; see Hardy's note-taking at *LNTH2*, p. 190-91.

[versification's] qualities'.²⁰⁶ This interrupting of versification is shared by other contemporary theorists. From De Selincourt, Hardy copied 'The art of the poet consists in introducing variation upon this basis of equality [offered by metre]'.²⁰⁷ The skilful marriage of two separate entities was a quality Hardy admired in other writers, particularly Swinburne. When, in his elegy, Hardy pays tribute to Swinburne's 'New words, in classic guise', it needs to be 'read literally [...] Hardy copied about 200 of Swinburne's "new words" [...] into his *Studies, Specimens &c.* notebook'.²⁰⁸ While this praise seems largely linguistic, Swinburne's 'metrical sophistication' impressed Hardy and taught him that 'within metrical forms it was possible to address all subjects, all areas of experience, however extreme or even abnormal'.²⁰⁹

In a famous passage from Hardy's *Life*, he recounts his learning that 'too regular a beat was bad art' (323). This precedes Hardy's famous analogy with Gothic architecture, which ends with the idea of 'a sudden blank in a wall where a window was to be expected' (*Life* 323), a figuration of the experience which 'The Voice' offers the reader. Linking this specific passage with Hardy's note-taking, Taylor states 'We have seen that expectation was a key concept of the new prosody' – expectation is as central to poetic debate as it is to psychological understandings of cognitive processing.²¹⁰ Hardy approaches his own poetry informed by Victorian prosodic theory, attuned to the possibilities of expectation. Emotions of loss are not just represented by 'The Voice's' broken-off final verse, but provoked by the

²⁰⁶Patmore, 'English Metrical Critics', p. 161.

²⁰⁷*LNT*2, p. 209. This article on 'English Prosody' was originally published in the *Quarterly Review* (July 1911).

²⁰⁸*CP*, p. 323; Taylor, *Hardy's Literary Language*, p. 308-09. Taylor gives an example of Hardy's admiration for Swinburne's mixing of registers: 'he said of Swinburne's "I said *never* be friends again with roses": "*beauty here from contrast of colloqu. phrase with high thought*"' (*Hardy's Literary Language*, p. 59). Hardy may have taken his phrasing for Swinburne's style from an article he copied into his notebook: 'The problem is to express new & profound ideas in a perfectly sound and classical style' (*LNT*1, p. 131, original emphasis).

²⁰⁹Ralph Pite, *Thomas Hardy: The Guarded Life* (London: Picador, 2006), p. 131 (Pite discusses Swinburne and Hardy pp. 126-33). Due to the remit of this thesis, I cannot give full credence to Swinburne's influence upon Hardy, not least because it is particular to Hardy (Frost once commented that '[I] Haven't cared much for [...] Swinburne', qtd. in *Robert Frost on Writing*, p. 75). Taylor asserts that 'The importance of Swinburne and Meredith's early influence on Hardy can be seen in the fact that an entire chapter of Hardy's autobiography will be entitled "Deaths of Swinburne and Meredith, 1908-1909", all the other chapters being names of personal events, places, or writings' (*Hardy's Metres*, p. 52).

²¹⁰Taylor, *Hardy's Metres*, p. 64.

modification of the verse form.²¹¹ Since expectations are borne of closely attending to the text, disappointing them has emotional impact.

Memory and attention are allied psychological systems. Indeed, Alan Baddeley considers renaming his ‘working memory’ model as ‘working attention’, before deciding that ‘temporary storage is an absolutely essential feature of the working-memory system as a whole’.²¹² Much as memory is aided by schemas which predict an outcome based on past experience, so too does attention manage to anticipate actions and thus reduce the workload. As psychologist D. E. Berlyne puts it, the ‘device which cuts down the cost of adjustment is *expectation*’.²¹³ Expectation exists so that the brain is prepared for subsequent events and, as Berlyne suggests, saves valuable resources in doing so: there is an expediency to expectation. The ease with which one can be led to expect something proves how deeply-held this instinct is. Psychologists have shown cueing effects even with individual words, both semantic cueing (‘church’ and ‘vicar’) and rhyme cueing (‘first’ and ‘worst’).²¹⁴ Something as ordered and familiar as a poem’s metrical scheme, then, is mnemonically effective. After reading just the first four lines of ‘The Voice’, the reader already awaits the *abab* rhyme scheme and (seemingly) knows the length of the forthcoming lines. Any poem with regular stanzas taps into this capacity for expectation.

However, anticipation brings with it its negative possibility: disappointment. If one state of affairs is waited for, it can either arrive and satisfy the belief, or not arrive and disappoint it. This lack need not be detrimental to the poem: Berlyne concludes the necessity for diversity in the Arts:

The variation on a theme, the ornament, and the grace note are all safeguards against the insipidity of exact repetition, while preserving

²¹¹For the efficacy of ‘The Voice’ in expressing grief, see David Cecil ‘The Hardy Mood’, in *Thomas Hardy: Poems, A Casebook*, eds. James Gibson and Trevor Johnson (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1979), 232-238 (p. 238)). Larkin’s ‘The Poetry of Hardy’ makes this a linguistic point as well: while some critics dislike such archaisms/neologisms as ‘existlessness’ and ‘wistlessness’, Larkin argues that ‘Hardy’s diction is often quaint [...] I feel that the quaintness, if it is quaintness, is a kind of striving to be accurate’ (*Required Writing*, p. 176).

²¹²Alan Baddeley, ‘Working memory or working attention?’ in *Attention: Selection, Awareness and Control; A Tribute to Donald Broadbent*, eds. by Alan Baddeley and Lawrence Weiskrant (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 152-170 (p. 168).

²¹³D. E. Berlyne, *Conflict, Arousal, and Curiosity* (New York; Toronto; London: McGraw-Hill, 1960), p. 184 (original emphasis).

²¹⁴David C. Rubin, *Memory in Oral Traditions: The Cognitive Psychology of Epic, Ballads, and Counting-out Rhymes* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 161-67.

enough resemblance to the original to keep disorientation within comfortable and controllable limits.²¹⁵

(Good) poetry requires a balance between the expected and the less anticipated: while Hardy easily avoids ‘insipidity’, he breaks out of Berlyne’s defined boundaries here, introducing a complete change of metre in his final stanza. Even by looking at the line endings, the switch from the dactylic (or stressed-unstressed-unstressed) endings of the *a*-rhyme lines to the briefer trochaic (or hypermetric) endings of lines 13, 14 and 16 is startling. The triplet momentum which has built up over three stanzas has nowhere to go: the virtue of Hardy’s phrase ‘faltering forward’ at the beginning of his clashing stanza is that the reader runs out of words to say; s/he falls off one line into the next, especially since these lines are nearly half the expected length.

The ‘resemblance to the original’ for which Berlyne calls is present in the imagery – the ‘breeze’ of stanza three transforms into ‘wind oozing thin’ and the final line is a depleted version of the first. The resemblance is also present in the maintained *abab* rhyme scheme of the final stanza, but this only serves to provide further disorientation. While the rhyme scheme groups lines 1 and 3, and lines 2 and 4 together into pairs in the schematics of the poem, visual attention is encouraged to make a 3/1 grouping in the final stanza, of the shorter first, second and fourth lines against the longer third line. Visually, the most obvious feature to attend to is the difference in length. Therefore, although the poem remains controlled (there is no deviation to free verse, a different rhyme scheme or stanza length), the new metre and lineation causes antagonism between expected patterns (the rhyme scheme) and disappointed patterns (the metre). As attention is pulled in these opposing directions, ‘The Voice’ can have its radical, memorable, effect.

Psychological angles on the literary history of expectancy

‘Expectation, usually described as a cognitive attitude, becomes a peculiar form of action, getting ready for, namely, to receive certain kinds of stimuli rather than others’
– I. A. Richards²¹⁶

²¹⁵Berlyne, *Conflict, Arousal, and Curiosity*, p. 251.

²¹⁶I. A. Richards, *The Principles of Literary Criticism*, 1924 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959), p. 88.

Father of Practical Criticism I. A. Richards was sensitive to anticipation and disappointment beyond literary expectations and in broader terms as categories of cognition. Richards was particularly interested in the relationship between science and literature and has only recently been appreciated as ‘one of the most important voices that inform a literary-cognitive undertaking’.²¹⁷ Indeed, Gregory V. Jones claims that, though a stalwart of literary criticism, ‘Richards could well be claimed jointly by psychology’.²¹⁸ Richards stresses the differences between individual readers because of the uniqueness of mind and often concerns itself with ‘attitudes – how they feel about this or that as part of the world’, emphasising how culture affects mind-set.²¹⁹ He argues that literary critics are too often ‘needlessly ignorant of the general psychological form of the experiences with which he [the reader] is concerned’.²²⁰ Richards’s debt to psychology is seen in his use of ‘scientific’ diagram and the mention of contemporary psychologists Von Kries, Koffka and Semon.²²¹ Having been neglected by psychology for decades, Jones recuperates Richards 1924 theory of memory alongside 1980s connectionist models, and my use of Richards here follows in the ‘Renaissance’ of appreciating his cognitive work.²²²

As the epigraph makes clear, to read poetry is to prepare to read more (of the same), as the reader habituates to the given stimuli. Although not in psychological terms, Hardy knew that the reader anticipates a constant verse form – one need only think of his many ballads, or those poems which have a rousing

²¹⁷Joseph Glicksohn and Chanita Goodblatt, ‘Reclaiming I. A. Richards’, review of David West, *I. A. Richards and the Rise of Cognitive Stylistics* (2013), *Poetics Today*, 35.1-2 (2014): 173-89 (p. 174).

²¹⁸Gregory V. Jones, ‘A Protoconnectionist Theory of Memory’, *Memory and Cognition*, 21.3 (1993): 375-78 (pp. 377-78).

²¹⁹I. A. Richards, *Poetries and Sciences*, p. 49.

²²⁰Richards, *Principles*, p. 114.

²²¹Furthermore, his publisher advertises new psychological texts at the back of Richards’s literary work.

²²²I take the term ‘Renaissance’ from Chanita Goodblatt and Joseph Glicksohn’s article ‘Conversations with I. A. Richards: The Renaissance in Cognitive Literary Studies’, *Poetics Today*, 31.3 (2010): 387-432. For Richards alongside 1980s connectionist theories, see Jones, ‘A Protoconnectionist Theory of Memory’. David West follows Jones in claiming that Richards was more a psychologist than a literary critic – and was a ‘protocognitivist’ – in *I. A. Richards and the Rise of Cognitive Stylistics* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013). Joshua Gang places Richards’s insistence on close reading within psychological models in ‘Behaviourism and the Beginnings of Close Reading’, *ELH*, 78.1 (2011): 1-25. I. A. Richards is also providing affect studies with food for thought, whether it is to disagree with him (as in Jennifer Ashton’s ‘Two Problems with a Neuroaesthetic Theory of Interpretation’, *Nonsite*, 2 (2011): <<http://nonsite.org/article/two-problems-with-a-neuroaesthetic-theory-of-interpretation>>)

refrain (such as ‘Great Things’ or ‘Lines to a movement in Mozart’s E-flat symphony’): Hardy jolts ‘The Voice’ out of synchronisation intentionally.

Richards opens his ‘Rhythm and Metre’ chapter with the following observation:

Rhythm and its specialised form, metre, depend upon repetition, and expectancy. Equally where what is expected recurs and where it fails, all rhythmical and metrical effects spring from anticipation. As a rule this anticipation is unconscious.²²³

This definition makes expectation crucial to poetry. For metre to have effect, the reader has to have attended to what has gone before and adjusted her/his mental schema of the poem. Moreover, memory is also implicated where repetition is involved. This surely includes short-term memory (for the rhyme scheme and recent effects), but also long-term memory, if the reader starts to hear a similar pattern (such as iambic pentameter) behind it, as this will catalyse a certain set of expectations based on past experience. As seen earlier in Abrams, Richards is interested in the ‘unconscious’ effects which poetry has upon the reader. What was for Abrams a matter of cultural predilections hinting at scientific explanation, Richards stages as local perceptual principles which in turn influence the reader’s experience of cultural objects. What is gone from Abrams is the value judgment that once expectations are disappointed, the poetry is less enjoyable: Richards ‘equally’ allows for ‘effects’ when ‘what is expected recurs and where it fails’. It is only in this more liberal view of expectations, that ‘The Voice’ can have its effect.

Since poetic structure is multi-faceted, it provides a greater level of expected features and thus the possibility of greater memorisation. Richards builds up his concept of language-stimulus response by showing that the simplest cases are the most difficult in terms of expectation:

A single word by itself, let us say ‘night,’ will raise almost as many different thoughts and feelings as there are persons who hear it. The range of variety with a single word is very little restricted. But put it into a sentence and the variation is narrowed; put it into the context of a whole passage, and it is still further fixed; and let it occur in such an intricate

²²³Richards, *Principles*, p. 134.

whole as a poem and the responses of competent readers may have a similarity which only its occurrence in such a whole can secure.²²⁴

Richards is right to stress the narrowing of variation, from a whole stage to an attentional spotlight, but his word choices of ‘fixed’ and ‘secure’ sound too rigid – the art of poetry is to find a freedom within these formal limitations.²²⁵ He shows, though, is that poetry allows the reader to mobilise her/his previous knowledge in a useful and directed way.²²⁶ The brain is tempted to predict, even from one word, but in an energy-costly manner. In reading a poem one’s memory is encouraged as an aid, even before the poem itself becomes a possible object for remembrance. In this same vein, psychologist David C. Rubin has worked on the importance of combining constraints for remembering oral poetry, taking individual features to determine their singular and then combined properties in narrowing the field of possible word choice.

Richards exaggerates in claiming that ‘in metrical reading the narrowness and definiteness of expectancy, as much unconscious as ever in most cases, is very greatly increased, reaching in some cases, if rime is also used, almost exact precision’.²²⁷ While some of Hardy’s rhymes in ‘The Voice’ are predictable²²⁸ – view/knew, here/near – others are hardly obvious. ‘Town’ would go more easily with ‘down’ (a more common word) but Hardy opts for ‘gown’, more striking because it follows the only distinct and colourful image – ‘the original air-blue gown!’. ‘Listlessness’ is unusual enough that it does not readily suggest rhyme partners and many critics have found ‘wistlessness’ to be a weak submission to the necessity of rhyme.²²⁹ Similarly, few readers (especially modern ones) would awaken ‘norward’ from the proffered ‘forward’.

²²⁴Richards, *Principles*, pp. 9-10.

²²⁵‘Attentional spotlight’ is one psychological model of attention, put forward by Posner, Snyder and Davidson in 1980.

²²⁶Baddeley also cites this when discussing the reading process (*Your Memory*, pp. 172-73).

²²⁷Richards, *Principles*, p. 139. It is notable that all of the poetic features I focus on as expectancy patterns aid rote memorisation and thus were used in educational practices of the time. This is not my interest here, but the bibliography gives details of excellent surveys by Rubin (2007), Martin (2012) and Robson (2012).

²²⁸Again, not in the pejorative sense.

²²⁹Charles Lock refers to ‘the problem of “existlessness” and the substituted “wan wistlessness” in that much admired poem, “The Voice”’ (‘Inhibiting the Voice: Thomas Hardy and Modern Poetics’, in *A Companion to Thomas Hardy*, ed. by Keith Wilson (Malden, MA; Oxford; Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 450-64 (p. 456)).

Like Bridges and Hardy, Richards sees expectancy as the major difference between poetry and prose, for ‘even the most highly organised lyrical or “polyphonic” prose raises as it advances only a very ambiguous expectation’.²³⁰ This ambiguity means that although narrative/textual conventions may aid a reader, in general, prose requires more attention and is less memorable. It also suggests that expectation offers a certain pre-coding, one which I argue is of help to memory’s encoding process. Richards states ‘as it advances’ about prose, but this is also true of poetry since as it is experienced in real time, the expectancy builds: one deduces the metrical scheme, the rhyme scheme, the stanza pattern, and the trajectory of the content as one reads. In a similar framing of distinction, Coleridge – an object of critical study for Richards²³¹ – states ‘I write in metre, because I am about to use a language different from that of prose’.²³² Metre is the signal to begin expecting certain features. For Coleridge, metre is an organisation of a ‘balance of antagonists’ keeping the workings of passion in check.²³³ By this token, a breakdown in metre would denote a breaking out of passion, a supposition to which ‘The Voice’ conforms. The answer to line 12’s question ‘Heard no more again far or near?’ does not bear contemplation, and passion (as pain) pulls apart the traditional verse form.

To revisit two previously discussed quotations from Richards, when writing about metre he notes ‘this anticipation is unconscious’ and that expectancy is ‘as much unconscious as ever in most cases’.²³⁴ The expectancy brought about by metre is part of the reader’s natural cognition. Again, this is a quality about which Coleridge wrote: metre and its effects ‘act powerfully, though themselves unnoticed’, yet when appropriate stimulation is not ‘provided for the attention and feelings thus roused, there must needs be a disappointment felt’.²³⁵ The effects of anticipation and disappointment (though not always couched in those terms) are felt by readers across generations and even across disciplines (since Berlyne is a psychologist and Richards adopts a scientific angle). Each commentator points out that expectation is a natural by-product of any continued experience; Hardy takes advantage of this effect in ‘The Voice’. Though Richards begins to consider the

²³⁰Richards, *Principles*, p. 135.

²³¹I am thinking here of his *Coleridge on Imagination* (1934).

²³²S. T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. by Nigel Leask (London: Dent, 1997) p. 222.

²³³Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, p. 219.

²³⁴Richards, *Principles*, p. 134; p. 139.

²³⁵Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, p. 220.

scientific precepts behind expectancy in poetry, he stays well within the boundaries of literary criticism. By using a more developed and recent understanding of psychology, this project goes beyond New Criticism to explaining those features of poetry which have been observed since poetry's beginnings.

Wordsworth led the way in embracing rustic diction and a concern for the uses of metre and, as the introduction showed, Hardy was much influenced by Wordsworth's work. Much as the 'Preface' sought to explain Wordsworth's style and method, Hardy chose to quote from it in his own 'Apology' to his *Late Lyrics* (1922). Hardy wishes again to acknowledge, or to point out that he remembers, that

by the act of writing in verse an Author makes a formal engagement that he will gratify certain known habits of association; that he not only thus apprizes the Reader that certain classes of ideas and expressions will be found in his book, but that others will be carefully excluded.²³⁶

The publishing of poetry becomes an almost contractual agreement: here I will violate none of the regulations we laid out together.²³⁷ It is a design which brings together poem, poet and reader, and suggests that cultural memory provides guidelines to be honoured. It could almost be about memory, since 'laws of association' framed eighteenth-century theorising about memory.²³⁸ Verse, then, is recognisable as such and the memories the reader has of previous material enables her/him to read new material. In the original, the quotation continues 'this exponent or symbol held forth by metrical language must in different eras of literature have excited very different expectations'.²³⁹ This allows for metre as a culturally evolving phenomenon and posits it as a historical artefact, not just a sensory experience. It is precisely this simultaneity of experience and immediacy which poetry affords the reader that I emphasise forms the mnemonics of verse. Both Wordsworth and Hardy have the sense that poetry comes with certain culturally ingrained expectations,

²³⁶Qtd. in Hardy's 'Apology' in *CP*, pp. 556-57 and from William Wordsworth and S. L. Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*, eds. by R. L. Brett and A. R. Jones, 2nd edn (London; New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 288.

²³⁷Wordsworth furthers this when he notes that metre obeys 'certain laws, to which the Poet and Reader both willingly submit' (*Lyrical Ballads*, p. 303).

²³⁸See Coleridge on the 'law of association' in Hobbes among others (Chapters 6-7 of the *Biographia Literaria*).

²³⁹Wordsworth and Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*, pp. 288-89.

expectations so strong that they feel the need to explain their respective deviations from these habits.²⁴⁰

Psychology has recently investigated the effects of anticipation and disappointment using laboratory-based experiments. There has been debate over whether it is violation of expectation, or novelty which causes these effects. Memory is implicated in this question, since one paper asks ‘does an event capture attention to the extent that there is no recent memory for that event (i.e., its novelty or unfamiliarity), or, instead, to the extent that it violates an expectation based on the learning of a preceding pattern of stimulation?’²⁴¹ These two theories contest the role memory plays in such events: either there is no memory or neuronal model and hence the event creates surprise (novelty-detection account), or recent memory serves to cause confusion if the anticipated past experience fails to predict the event outcome (expectancy-violation account).

This is intriguing when one reconsiders the difference between metrical and free verse: in a 1923 letter to Amy Lowell (after the publication of Bridges’ article), Hardy takes her to task about expectancy. He allows that free verse contains ‘ideas striking, novel, or beautiful [...] which could be transfused into poetry’ but, considering why free verse seems to him not to be poetry, Hardy hazards ‘perhaps because there is no expectation raised of a response in sound or beat, and the pleasure of its gratification, as in regular poetry’ (6.186): Hardy seems to be aware of the reader, waiting to respond to the text. In another fragment, Hardy writes

the great charm of poetical form [...] lies in its [...] relation to something received or expected. Free verse [...] offers no attraction of that nature, except perhaps that one sort of cadence leads you to expect another of the sort, which may or may not follow: it is demanded as in measure or rhyme.²⁴²

²⁴⁰The other section of the Preface which Hardy quotes comes when Wordsworth is deploring the state of literature – this ‘degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation’ (*CP*, p. 560; Wordsworth and Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 294). The ‘thirst’ is the result of the paltry offerings of Wordsworth’s contemporaries, when compared to the ages of Shakespeare and Milton. This refers to a reading public’s expectation of great literature; an expectation which Wordsworth, then Hardy, claim is disappointed.

²⁴¹Francois Vachon, Robert W. Hughes and Dylan M. Jones, ‘Broken Expectations: Violation of Expectancies, Not Novelty, Captures Auditory Attention’, *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, 38.1 (2012): 164-177 (p. 164).

²⁴²Qtd. in William Levy-Turner, *William Barnes: The Man and the Poems* (Dorchester: Longmans, 1960), p. 186. As Levy-Turner points out, this is written ‘in Hardy’s hand at the back of a volume of American poetry from his library at Max Gate’ (p. 186).

‘Pleasure’, ‘attraction’: it is as if Hardy sees expectation in poetry as a psycho-physiological experience necessary for the reader’s satisfaction. The reader needs to be ‘led to expect’ as part of the reading experience and, as Bridges’s article also asserts, this is what free verse is missing.

Vachon and colleagues looked at auditory attentional capture – when one reacts to a noticeable, heard, difference – important given the auditory dimensions of reading poetry: internal or actual recitation. The results showed that violation of expectancies and not novelty was capturing attention. This would make the process more violent and more dynamic: novelty can provide welcome surprise and goes towards creating understanding, since it is defined by ‘a poor or lack of neuronal model’ – which can thence be bettered. In contrast, violation of expectancies always works against, not with, the brain, as it is the ‘violation of a neuronal model’.²⁴³ The preparedness of the reading mind attained by ‘The Voice’’s third stanza is of no use, because as Hardy violates expectancies, the model falls apart.

‘The Voice’ is a difficult poem, not least because it does not fit within the poetry of the time, or Hardy’s usual work. However, this little lyric of memory and grief pulls on the reader’s mental resources more than others by refusing the safety of relying on predictive schemas. Hardy need not turn to free verse in order to disrupt attention. The patterning of metre is shown to be sufficiently strong that even changing that one constraint can bring the mental faculties back to their full operational abilities. Psychology helps to explain what happens when Hardy, quite instinctively, changes verse within a poem, to ‘not as you were’ and at least one of the ‘voices’ in the poem is the reader’s brain ‘saying’ this to her/him. It is an exercise in attention and memory, for both the speaker and the reader, resulting in a beautiful, but disturbing, reading experience.

This thesis takes Abrams and Richards’ respective beginnings and explores how the phenomenon of expectations in poetry works cognitively. In looking both at large-scale formation of expectations through the use of poetic genres and narrating posthumous identity, and the small-scale expectancy patterns of the following section, it is possible to refine Abrams’s theory of critical/readership biases. Despite his relatively casual use of vocabulary, Abrams noticed the preparedness of mind

²⁴³Vachon, ‘Broken Expec’, p. 175.

integral to the reading experience. His instinct for scientific vocabulary can be built on, as this thesis looks at the habit-forming qualities of Hardy's and Frost's verse. Moreover, in using psychological studies to redefine poetic devices, the brain's own predilections for expectation can be brought to bear on the understanding of memory-rich poetry. Such poetry is typified by Hardy and Frost: not only does much of their poetic content centre on memory, but the memorability of their poems is in part formed by the use of these very devices. By angling the lens thus, the distinctive memorability of their poems can be appreciated.

Expectancy patterns of particular devices

i. Lineation

Now in my dial of glass appears
the soldier who is going to die.
He smiles, and moves about in ways
his mother knows, habits of his.
The wires touch his face: I cry
NOW.

– 'How to Kill', Keith Douglas²⁴⁴

The discussion thus far has centred on those expectations created by cultural contexts, but now turns to the local expectations which are inherent to verse itself. There are several expectations of poetic structure. Hardy's and Frost's poems look traditional at a glance, often with regular stanzas or standardised line lengths. Many Hardy poems appear akin to lyrics of musical verses typographically; the eye becomes accustomed to iambic pentameter when it receives multiple examples in Frost's *North of Boston*.

One of poetry's distinguishing characteristics is the lineation, the category of 'prose poems' having to account for those poems which too closely resemble the form of prose. Ezra Pound and his fellow modernists had little time for any poet prepared to sacrifice the movement or meaning of her/his poem to the length of the lines. The 1913 article 'Imagisme' (from this chapter's introduction), was followed by Pound's 'A few don'ts by an Imagiste'. Pound warns students off slavish adherence to poetic form:

²⁴⁴Keith Douglas, *The Complete Poems*, ed. by Desmond Graham (1978; repr. London; New York: Faber, 2000), p. 119.

Don't chop your stuff into separate *iamb*s. Don't make each line stop dead at the end, and then begin every next line with a heave. [...] you may fall victim to all sorts of false stopping due to line ends and caesurae.²⁴⁵

This is an argument against allowing the form to overtake the poem and control its versification. The violence of 'chopping' and the lumbering 'heave' characterise the writer as unwieldy, or as wielding words badly. 'False stopping' betrays an argument about naturalness within poetry: it implies the possibility of 'natural stopping' if one listens to the words, not the metre. One risk of metre is 'filling-in' – adding extraneous words merely to fit the metre. Pound demands 'If you are using a symmetrical form, don't put in what you want to say and then fill up the remaining vacuums with slush'; a poem should not achieve symmetry by default.²⁴⁶

In 1918, Pound revisited and expanded 'A few don'ts' in his 'Credo':

Form. – I think there is a "fluid" as well as a "solid" content, that some poems may have form as a tree has form, some as water poured into a vase. That most symmetrical forms have certain uses. That a vast number of subjects cannot be precisely, and therefore not properly rendered in symmetrical forms.²⁴⁷

Pound admits, if unwillingly, that metrical forms have their uses in the writing process. Meredith Martin contests both of these essays as too heavy-handedly promoting *vers libre* without acknowledging 'that meter in the Victorian era was similarly experimental, contested and varied'; however, I include them here as a counterpoint to Hardy's and Frost's own ideas of metre's value.²⁴⁸ Metrical verse is that which takes form 'as water poured into a vase', where the content – in terms of physical volume only – matches that of the container. This refers to a strict use of metre, but Pound is right to establish that the outline of a poem's shape is already formed for the expectant reader in a metrical poem: a reader may not know what is coming, but quickly learns how many beats to expect.

This kind of expectation is localised, generated by the minutiae of the poem itself. Lineation provides the poet with several further opportunities to make use of

²⁴⁵Ezra Pound, 'A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste', *Poetry*, ed. by Harriet Monroe, 1:6 (1913): 200-206 (p. 204, original emphasis).

²⁴⁶Pound, 'A Few Don'ts', p. 205.

²⁴⁷Ezra Pound, 'A Retrospect', in *Strong Words: Modern Poets on Modern Poetry*, eds. by W. N. Herbert and Matthew Hollis (Tarsset: Bloodaxe, 2000), pp. 17-25 (p. 22).

²⁴⁸Martin, *The Rise and Fall of Meter*, p. 184.

expectation and surprise, through the break at the end of every line. This is facilitated by the reading process: before text can access the memory, even sensory memory, the reader has to engage and focus the attention. Psychological studies into attention and the reading process are many, and detailed.²⁴⁹ In 1973, Abrams and Zuber studied information processing in reading. They were concerned with the saccades (eye movements) made during reading, both where the eye moved to and the time taken. The experiment used a normal text and a 'spaced text' which had blank spaces randomly placed throughout it. Abrams and Zuber found that the fixation points (where the eye pauses to focus) were not inside the blank spaces but always on text, and given the variety of length/placement of spaces, 'the accurate placement of the eye before and after the blank required anticipatory processing'.²⁵⁰ Although this is not memory proper, it is useful to the present study in that it shows expectation playing a role in the reading process – one is always reading ahead and preparing for the next word.

The other point of note to come out of this paper is the characteristics of reading in lines: a series of fixation pauses and then a move to the next line; a sequential progression. Frost describes this process in 'From Plane to Plane', that 'at every line end [we] | Pick up our eyes and carry them back idle | Across the page to where we started from' (*CPPP* 368), but though the eyes may be idle, the brain is not. As Abrams and Zuber show diagrammatically, the largest physical saccade made is that to return the reader to the start of the next line (termed the 'return sweep'). Although the time taken for this is fractional, the reader has a brief moment of expectation which can either be satisfied or violated: this gives line breaks their potency when manipulated by poets.

Hardy's famous poem about the Titanic, 'The Convergence of the Twain', uses its line breaks to cause surprise within its expectancy patterns. The unusual structure which Hardy adopts here takes the form of two shorter lines (often set in the past), followed by one long line almost double the length of the previous two (often set in the present), with three consecutive rhymes. The return sweep is here

²⁴⁹See Maryanne Wolf *Proust and the Squid: The Story of Science of the Reading Brain* (Thriplow: Icon Books, 2008) for a popular science overview.

²⁵⁰S. G. Abrams and B. L. Zuber, 'Some Temporal Characteristics of Information Processing During Reading', *Reading Research Quarterly*, 8.1 (1972): 40-5 (p. 46).

exacerbated, as due to indentation the beginning of each stanza's final line is further away than the usual starting position:

II

Steel chambers, late the pyres
Of her salamandrine **fires**,
Cold currents thrud, and turn to rhythmic tidal lyres.

III

Over the mirrors meant
To glass the **opulent**
The sea-worm crawls – grotesque, slimed, dumb, indifferent.

IV

Jewels in joy designed
To ravish the **sensuous mind**
Lie lightless, all their sparkles bleared and black and blind.

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Emboldened here are those words which are complicit in the process of expectation and surprise. In each of these early stanzas, Hardy uses the two opening lines to establish an image of the Titanic as she was intended, only to scupper that idea with a negation falling on the first word(s) of the following line. Although the reader may habituate to this oppositional turn, the form still enacts the undoing of expectation every time, by forcing the reader to delay in reaching an understanding of Hardy's message.

Hardy is adept at using forms which mix long and short lines to create this variation of pace within stanzas, yet always maintains the form so these variances hold a certain familiarity. Lyrics of loss literally diminish as the speaker chases the spectre of his love:

I look and see it there, shrinking, shrinking,
I look back at it amid the rain
For the very last time; for my sand is sinking,
And I shall traverse old love's domain
Never again.

'At Castle Boterel' 352

Although the stanzas remain regular, they have enough internal variation to unsettle the reader, and to evoke a sense of lost syllables when the line suddenly shortens.²⁵¹ Although the research Abrams and Zuber carried out was not with poetry, it bears on the use of metrical forms with standardised line lengths. Whether it is Hardy's varied stanzas, or Frost's strong trust of pentameter, both poets ask the reader's eye and ear to decode the poem's pattern.

ii. Rhyme

Hoar-frost that crackles with a will is
already silvering all the plain...
(the reader thinks the rhyme is *lilies*:
here, seize it quick for this quatrain!)
– *Eugene Onegin*, Pushkin²⁵²

Both Hardy and Frost continued to use rhymes in their verse, despite the fact that, as shall be seen, many within the contemporary poetic world were beginning to suspect, and turn away from, rhyme. Rhyme instantly makes Hardy's and Frost's poetry is more memorable than that of others. Indeed, 'Stopping' (one of Frost's most well-memorised poems) has a triple rhyme within a four-line stanza: 'Whose woods these are I think I know. | His house is in the village though; | He will not see me stopping here | To watch his woods fill up with snow'.²⁵³ Rhyme is a strong constraint, allowing greater predictability and thus memorability. I use 'constraint' non-pejoratively, in the sense of a limiting factor with a mnemonic function: it makes the brain remember and retrieve words in a more efficiently.

Rhyme is appealing in the way it satisfactorily pairs words. Young children acquiring language use rhyme as they experiment with the sounds they can make; this is also reflected in the high rhyme content of early years books.²⁵⁴ Significantly,

²⁵¹'His Visitor' does this to an even greater extent, where lines upwards of eleven syllables long collapse to a final three syllable line.

²⁵²Alexander Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*, trans. by Charles Johnston (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), p. 126 (original emphasis).

²⁵³CPPP, p. 207. Tim Kendall traces the history – and possible alternatives – of the final stanza's construction (*The Art of Robert Frost*, pp. 321-22).

²⁵⁴See P. E. Bryant, L. Bradley, M. Maclean and J Crossland, 'Nursery Rhymes, Phonological Skills and Reading', *Journal of Child Language*, 16.2 (1989): 407-28; Peter Bryant, Morag Maclean, and Lynette Bradley, 'Rhyme, Language, and Children's Reading', *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 11.03 (1990): 237-52; Clare Kirtley, Peter Bryant, Morag MacLean and Lynette Bradley, 'Rhyme, Rime, and the Onset of Reading', *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 48.2 (1989): 224-45; and Usha Goswami, 'Phonological Priming and Orthographic Analogies in Reading', *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 49.2 (1990): 323-40.

once rhyme is encountered, there is a strong tendency towards it. In 1969, psychologists Bower and Bolton experimented with how well pairs of words which rhyme are remembered versus non-rhyming pairs. Having established the helpfulness of rhyme to remembering, their third experiment had participants learn 8 rhyme pairs, 8 unrelated [U] pairs and 8 rhyme-interference [RI] pairs. The latter were pairs created by re-pairing eight stimulus words with different response words i.e. if before they had been pin-fin, cat-hat, tan-ban, the RI pairs might be pin-hat, cat-ban and tan-fin. When tested, participants did well with the rhyming pairs, but poorly with the RI pairs because they insisted on re-pairing them and thus ‘repairing’ the rhyme. It appears that ‘the presence of some rhyming pairs in the list leads [a Stanford undergraduate] to adopt a rhyming response bias on unlearned pairs, especially if the rhyming response is available in the list’.²⁵⁵ This overgeneralisation of rhyme came from its presence elsewhere, from knowing that some pairs would rhyme. Further experimentation showed that when tested only with unrelated and rhyme-interference pairs, when ‘the instructions contained no mention of rhymes’, the effect disappeared and there was no difference in performance between the U and RI pairs.²⁵⁶ Once the brain is led to expect rhyme, rhyme is what it will generate.

The generation of rhymes which ‘fit’ the constraint is typified by an amusing experiment by Hyman and Rubin, in which undergraduates had to recall the lines of Beatles’ songs. The errors here still managed ‘to preserve rhyme and alliteration by introducing new rhymes instead of the ones in the original song’.²⁵⁷ This led to the creation of such novelties as ‘wonder how you manage to be caressed’ in response to ‘baby at your breast’.²⁵⁸ Indeed, adherence to the songs’ formal properties meant that when there were errors, these ‘rarely violated the thematic, rhythmic, and poetic constraints’.²⁵⁹ While the verses here are musical, William James had earlier observed of poetry that ‘Everyone must know the tantalizing effect of the blank rhythm of some forgotten verse, restlessly dancing in one’s mind, striving to be filled out with words’: due to its form, verse beckons

²⁵⁵Gordon H. Bower and Laura S. Bolton, ‘Why Are Rhymes Easy to Learn?’, *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 82.3 (1969): 453-61 (p. 460).

²⁵⁶Bower and Bolton, ‘Why Are Rhymes Easy to Learn?’, p. 461.

²⁵⁷Rubin, *Memory in Oral Traditions*, p. 77.

²⁵⁸The original song lyrics are ‘wonder how you manage to feed the rest’.

²⁵⁹Ira E. Hyman Jr. and David C. Rubin, ‘Memorabeatlia: A Naturalistic Study of Long-term Memory’, *Memory & Cognition*, 18.2 (1990): 205-14 (p. 212).

remembering.²⁶⁰ Hyman and Rubin's expectation experiment insists upon interplay between cognition and culture, since Beatles songs have a much greater resonance within social consciousness than other rhymed lines. Participants drew on their shared knowledge of popular culture, with knowledge of the Beatles canon helping cue credible rhyme responses as well as the integral properties of the lines. Importantly, the authors use 'naturalistic material', looking at real-world engagement with rhyme constraints, rather than under laboratory-memorised conditions.²⁶¹ My own study considers the dual effects of cognitive and cultural factors, seeing how a dynamic – and indivisible – relationship between the two creates the particular expectancy effects seen in poetry.

Even within my own writing, an expectancy effect can be seen. The unconscious leaning towards alliteration ('cue credible rhyme responses') is evidence of the brain's establishing patterns for continuation. This bias towards what has already been established is an example of priming, defined by Tulving and colleagues as 'facilitative effects of an encounter with a stimulus on subsequent processing of the same stimulus (direct priming) or a related stimulus (indirect priming)'.²⁶² Priming can be thought of as preparing the brain for the second receipt of a stimulus, an unconscious form of memory which differs from recognition.

The difference in these forms of memory is clear when it is stated that amnesiac patients show priming effects, even when their recognition skills are severely impaired. Tulving and colleagues comment on how 'the relatively intact performance of amnesic patients on the fragment-completion task represents yet another example of skills and knowledge that are [...] preserved in amnesia'.²⁶³ Despite amnesiacs' memory impairments, they remember more than they know themselves to remember. This type of memory engages with brain processing at a very basic level and priming (providing access to unconscious-nigh-inadvertent remembering) is something of which poetry takes advantage. Rhyme itself is a form of phonological priming – 'words prime other words within their rhyme category'.²⁶⁴

²⁶⁰James, *Principles*, p. 244.

²⁶¹Hyman and Rubin, 'Memorabeatlia', p. 214.

²⁶²Endel Tulving, Daniel L. Schacter, and Heather A. Stark, 'Priming Effects in Word-Fragment Completion Are Independent of Recognition Memory', *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, 8.4 (1982): 336-42 (p. 336).

²⁶³Tulving, 'Priming Effects', p. 341.

²⁶⁴Rubin, *Memory in Oral Traditions*, p. 79.

Although this is at the level of sensory activation and ‘such priming need not increase memory’, it is at work locally within the poem’s mnemonic make-up.²⁶⁵

That rhyme is so ingrained within cognitive processing might explain why poetry turned away from it at the start of the twentieth century. Donald Wesling points out that ‘Robert Bridges, who may be taken as representing a crisis of versification in the period after Tennyson and before Pound and Eliot, said in 1912: “Anyone may see that serious rhyme is now exhausted in English verse”’.²⁶⁶ There was a new sense that rhyme was not capable of ‘seriousness’; being so ingrained within cognitive processing perhaps made it too easy. As already shown, rhyme is cognitively – naturally – appealing; in his introduction, Wesling notes that ‘rhyme is a deception all the more suspect because it gives us pleasure’.²⁶⁷ Expectation is seen as becoming too strong in this process of aesthetic pleasure, in a way that is controlled by the poetry rather than the poet:

In an early letter (1909), Wallace Stevens defines this combined limitation and necessity of the poetic device:

In the “June Book” I made “breeze” rhyme with “trees,” and have never forgiven myself. It is a correct rhyme, of course – but unpardonably “expected.” Indeed, none of my rhymes are (most likely) true “instruments of music.” The words to be rhymed should not only sound alike, but they should enrich and deepen and enlarge each other, like two harmonious notes.

When the correct device is also the expected one and by definition outworn, the act of composition will bristle with difficulties, with unforgivable wrong choices.²⁶⁸

‘Unpardonably “expected”’ writes Stevens, the quotation marks typographically betraying his wince at the crime. It is figured as sinful to lead the reader into inevitability, yet in the act of reading, the reader is constantly trying to deduce what is to come. If the poet is maker, it is her/his responsibility to designate the ‘right’ sounds. Here Stevens states definitively that expectation is not a desirable quality within poetry of the period. As both Stevens and Wesling point out, too flagrant a

²⁶⁵Rubin, *Memory in Oral Traditions*, p. 80.

²⁶⁶Donald Wesling, *The Chances of Rhyme: Device and Modernity* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1980) p. 129.

²⁶⁷Wesling, *The Chances of Rhyme*, p. ix.

²⁶⁸Wesling, *The Chances of Rhyme*, p. 35.

rhyme makes for bad poetry, or at least makes for something comic rather than ‘serious’ (in Bridges terminology).

There is a concern that rhyme is too natural, a pattern one falls into expectedly without due intellectual effort. Ford Madox Ford criticises rhyme and metre because ‘simple and unlettered beings’ can and will use them: children ‘will almost invariably fake up some little rhyme, now and again, and will chant it in a sing song voice’.²⁶⁹ The very naturalness of these devices makes Ford undervalue them. The phrase ‘fake up’ rhyme, though, suggests these natural emanations are not genuine. ‘Fake’ seems judgemental given that children aim for phonological pleasure through rhyme, rather than meaning; these rhymes are not fake in intention, but in their semantic reception. Importantly, one does not have to be able to read in order to compose rhythms or rhymes, only to hear. As will be considered further in Chapter 3, Frost also insisted one ‘get away from the sing-song’ in poetry, and deriding ‘the sing-singing [...] Alfie No-yes’.²⁷⁰ Ford implies the need for more intellectual effort in writing poetry, noticing rhyme and rhythm as natural phenomena – apt for expressing affect – but not necessarily literary within themselves.

Ford was right to suspect an emotional attachment to rhyme, but not necessarily to distrust it. The cognitive bias within rhyme alluded to as priming, has been discovered not just to modulate emotion, but actively to cause affect within the reader. Rhyme has a peculiarly powerful effect upon the human brain, indeed the so-called ‘rhyme-as-reason effect’ is commented upon by psychologists.²⁷¹ This is the phenomenon of rhymed phrases being more readily believed than their non-rhymed parallels. Exploited in politics and advertising, the most famous example within cultural history is of the persuasive force of defence attorney Johnnie Cochran’s plea to the jury during the O. J. Simpson trial ‘If the gloves don’t fit, you must acquit!’.²⁷²

²⁶⁹Qtd. in *Critical Writings of Ford Madox Ford*, ed. by Frank McShane (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), p. 158. Robert Pinsky interestingly picks up the same groups of people as Ford when discussing rhyme (‘dire abandonment [...] often makes institutionalized souls, especially children, croon and rock rhythmically’ (*Democracy*, p. 19)), but to stress instead rhyme’s affinity with human emotion.

²⁷⁰*LRF1*, p. 175; p. 140. Frost is referring to Alfred Noyes (1880-1958), English poet.

²⁷¹See Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (2011; repr. London: Penguin, 2012), p. 63.

²⁷²See Matthew S. McGlone and Jessica Tofighbakhsh, ‘The Keats Heuristic: Rhyme as Reason in Aphorism Interpretation’, *Poetics*, 26.4 (1999): 235-44; and Christopher Buckley, *Wry Martinis*, (London: Allison & Busby, 1997),

pp. 65-67, p. 69 for a comic take on how Cochran’s rhyme echoes through other political/legal disputes. Interestingly, journalists focus on the ‘mnemonic value of rhyme in Cochran’s statement’ (McGlone, ‘The Keats Heuristic’, p. 240).

Similar to the children's 'fake' rhymes mentioned by Ford, in the context of the courtroom, Cochran's phonological resemblance promises much more than it delivers. Psychologists McGlone and Tofighbakhsh, publishing in *Poetics*, term this the 'Keats heuristic', 'in which the aesthetic qualities of a message are equated with its truth'.²⁷³ To test its effect, they gave participants a set of aphorisms: the rhyming original, followed by two modified non-rhyming proverbs (with the first and second rhyming words respectively replaced with synonyms). An example would be

Anger restrained is wisdom gained.

M1: Anger held back is wisdom gained.

M2: Anger restrained is wisdom acquired.²⁷⁴

Participants had to rate the comprehensibility of each aphorism, followed by 'the degree to which they perceived the aphorism as an "accurate description of human behaviour"'.²⁷⁵ While comprehensibility ratings did not vary that much, the rhymed aphorisms were rated markedly higher for accuracy. To check that there was not an explicit belief that rhyming aphorisms are more accurate, participants were also asked, 'In your opinion, do aphorisms that rhyme describe human behavior more accurately than those that do not rhyme?'. McGlone and Tofighbakhsh report that 'all 60 participants responded "no" and, anecdotally, many gave us quizzical looks'.²⁷⁶ This effect is not conscious – rhyme has an uncanny ability to alter one's beliefs and reactions without prior permission. The emotional modulation rhyme can cause is another aspect of its mnemonic power.

Within literary criticism, Marken argues that Hardy's poems are

made simultaneously bearable and more intense because of the rigid, even ceremonious formality and aesthetic distance his rhyming imparts [...] he compels his rhymes to chant and build toward strains of unspoken anxiety, impending fate, so that the rhymes *per se* make meaning.²⁷⁷

²⁷³McGlone, 'The Keats Heuristic', p. 240. They are referring to the Keats line 'beauty is truth, truth beauty' from 'Ode on a Grecian Urn'.

²⁷⁴McGlone, 'The Keats Heuristic', p. 240.

²⁷⁵McGlone, 'The Keats Heuristic', pp. 238-39.

²⁷⁶McGlone, 'The Keats Heuristic', p. 239.

²⁷⁷Ronald Marken, "'As Rhyme Meets Rhyme" in the Poetry of Thomas Hardy', in *The Poetry of Thomas Hardy*, eds. by Patricia Clements and Juliet Grindle (London: Vision, 1980), pp. 18-32 (p. 25, original emphasis).

For Marken, rhyme helps to universalise a poem's subject. The paradox of rhyme is that it makes things 'simultaneously bearable and more intense': expectation allows the reader to 'know' a certain amount of what is coming, but thus also to form dread, when an 'unspoken anxiety' is evident.²⁷⁸ This is evident in such poems as 'Beeny Cliff', where form contradicts content in the final stanza:

What if still in chasmal beauty looms that wild weird western shore,
The woman now is – elsewhere – whom the ambling pony bore,
And nor knows nor cares for Beeny, and will laugh there nevermore.

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The phonological outcome is already known, the rhyme triply present, even as the poem confesses euphemistically that the woman is 'elsewhere'. Having adapted to the rhyme scheme, 'more' begins to assemble for the reader from the first line. However, even though 'what if still in chasmal beauty' posits a possible alternative (and tricks the reader into thinking it is about 'the woman'), the rhyme comes to rest on 'nevermore', denying further contact even as sound echoes.²⁷⁹

Frost, too, unsettles the reader: the rhymes of his sonnet 'Design' tie together three disparate white objects, encircling the vortex that is its final question about creation: 'what but design of darkness to appall?— | If design govern in a thing so small' (*CPPP* 275). Even the more intimate poems share this dread: the rhymes of Hardy's 'The Going' insist on the powerlessness of the grieving lover, and, as shall be seen, Frost's 'Acquainted with the Night' similarly allows the reader to predict the sombre outcome. Rhyme, it might be said, makes things audible and this is where its 'mnemonic effect' lies: not only can it make the reader hear connections where previously there were none, but rhyme allows those previously unspeakable emotional events to be vocalised at all.²⁸⁰ Looking forward to Chapter 2's interest in how poetry can forge particular connections, McDonald writes 'A rhyme makes two different things parts of a relation, and (it might seem) almost parts of each other: but the composing poet knows that this is not really the case, that the relation is tinged

²⁷⁸For a reading of Hardy's rhymes and 'irrationality' see Taylor, *Hardy's Literary Language*, p. 331.

²⁷⁹It is possible also that readers heard 'nevermore' resonate with further despair thanks to Poe's 'The Raven', which had garnered fame since its first publication in 1845.

²⁸⁰Marken, "'As Rhyme Meets Rhyme'", p. 25. Semi-mirroring Marken's criticism, Larkin notes (though concerning rhythm rather than rhyme) that 'Immediately you begin a Hardy poem your own inner response begins to rock in time with the poem's rhythm and I think that this is quite inimitable' (*Required Writing*, p. 176), 'inner response' again suggesting emotional modulation on the part of the reader.

with the arbitrary, and with luck, in ways that undermine any inevitability in the connection'.²⁸¹ Poetry is purposeful in its creation of certain expectations, and certain memories.

At its core, rhyme is a device of expectation: rhyme readies.²⁸² As soon as the first rhyme is noticed, the next is anticipated. It is a constraint which aids memory by sizeably cutting down the number of choices for another line's ending, and helps the reader to conceptualise the structure of the poem.²⁸³ Rhyme experiments in a laboratory are devoid of semantic meaning, but within the context of a poem, rhyme is not random. Rubin writes about this in terms of combining constraints:

The rhyme ending of a word tells little about its meaning, but once a category of rhyme ending and a category of meaning are fixed, the set of words that can fit both constraints is very small.²⁸⁴

An obvious observation perhaps, but fundamental to poetry's mnemonic properties. Experimental evidence shows that rhyme priming is strongest when it is combined with meaning: phonological and semantic features are used together to discriminate appropriate outcomes.²⁸⁵ Using this predictability, some poems can lead the reader to foretell correctly a poem's features before they happen:

I have been one acquainted with the night.
I have walked out in rain – and back in rain.
I have outwalked the furthest city light.

I have looked down the saddest city lane.
I have passed by the watchman on his beat
And dropped my eyes, unwilling to explain.

I have stood still and stopped the sound of feet

²⁸¹McDonald, *Sound Intentions*, p. 338.

²⁸²In a public lecture, Simon Jarvis claimed that 'the sole criterion of rhyme is memorability, not proximity' (in analysing Swinburne's verse, where the rhyme word might come tens of lines later). Rhyme has 'to be in the reader's mind when its partner shows up' ('Rhyme: Devices and Desires', Public lecture, Peterhouse Theory Group, University of Cambridge (October 2010)).

²⁸³See Street on rhyming couplets (*The Memory of Sound: Preserving the Sonic Past*, Routledge Research in Cultural and Media Studies, 65 (New York and London: Routledge, 2014), p. 5).

²⁸⁴Rubin, *Memory In Oral Traditions*, pp. 108-09.

²⁸⁵David N. Rapp and Arthur G. Samuel, 'A Reason to Rhyme: Phonological and Semantic Influences on Lexical Access', *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, 28.3 (2002): 564-71.

When far away an interrupted cry
Came over houses from another street,

But not to call me back or say good-by;
And further still at an unearthly height,
O luminary clock against the sky

Proclaimed the time was neither wrong nor right.
I have been one acquainted with the night. *CPPP* 234

‘Acquainted with the Night’ is crushingly regular: the anaphoric ‘I have’, the iambic pentameter, the four verses of *terza rima*. There is little change within the speaker’s experiences, too: to walk ‘out in rain – and back in rain’ is predictable, almost banal. Frost’s mention of ‘one luminary clock’ which ‘proclaimed the time’ visualises and makes figurative the tolling of the rhyme words. At the end of the poem, having already been given ‘unearthly height’ and then ‘right’, the reader expects his third ‘-ight’ rhyme and can see the suitability of the title and thus the first line: ‘I have been one acquainted with the night’. Frost meets this expectation, but undercuts the rhyme scheme, ending on a couplet and losing the intervening rhyme word. The clock may be ‘neither wrong nor right’, but Frost nudges the time just slightly out of joint, to meet yet alter the reader’s expectations.

In structuring a strong rhyme scheme and then tampering with it, Frost keeps the reader only ever ‘acquainted’ with the form: knowing enough to anticipate features, but never to predict them fully. Like the detached-sounding lyric ‘I’ here, speaking in the less-than-present present perfect tense, the form is always at one remove, oddly formal but not absolutely strict. Even without conscious effort, Frost’s poem stimulates localised cognitive processes which in turn catalyse long-term memory. Both Hardy and Frost consistently couch their poems in rhyme, leaning on the music of the repeated sound, such that it has an emotional effect which increases its mnemonic strength. Frost will fall back into established patterns his reader can catch: like the speaker ‘drowsing off’ in ‘After Apple-Picking’, the reader is suddenly, amid irregular line-lengths and irregular rhymes, hooked again with the sound of ‘two or three | Apples I didn’t pick upon some bough. | But I am done with apple-picking now’ (*CPPP* 70). Hardy, instead, tends to use standardised rhyme schemes. By using sounds that are heard multiple times, they turn their poems into things overheard: familiar, already half-known.

iii. Metre

Now, that verse far exceedeth prose in the knitting up of the memory, the reason is manifest: the words (besides their delight, which hath a great affinity to memory) being so set as one word cannot be lost but that the whole work fails [...] Besides, one word so, as it were, begetting another, as, be it in rhyme or measured verse, by the former a man shall have a near guess to the follower.
– Philip Sidney²⁸⁶

Verses, as a series of organising units, have long been recognised as pertinent to memorisation. Centuries before the cognitive revolution or the birth even of psychology as a discipline, Sidney's 1595 'Defence' identified the mnemonic qualities of versification as 'manifest'. These properties are seen as intrinsic to verse, given that all this happens from 'the words (besides their delight)', before diction and content are even considered. The poet has a ready set of mnemonic tools to exploit before s/he begins. Long before Richards or Rubin, Sidney notes that the versification allows the reader 'a near guess to the follower [word]', that combining constraints increases memorability. Sidney's statement insists upon verse as a holistic unit, but one that operates word by word, in sequence. One word lost would ruin the entire work, but instead poetry sees 'one word [...] begetting another', cumulatively building expectations. Sidney asserts poetry's unique formal qualities as the seat of memorability.

These general properties of metre are ones which Hardy and Frost use to their advantage. Even within regular poems, the expectation has to be partly improvised in real time as the reader experiences the stanza or pattern for the first time. The opening of Hardy's 'The Going' is worth revisiting:

Why did you give no hint that night
That quickly after the morrow's dawn,
And calmly, as if indifferent quite,
You would close your term here, up and be gone
Where I could not follow
With wing of swallow
To gain one glimpse of you ever anon! 338

²⁸⁶Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry (or The Defence of Poesy)*, ed. by Geoffrey Shepherd, 3rd edn, rev. by R. W. Maslen, (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 101-02.

The first line, in fact, is unusual in having eight syllables, as opposed to the poem's usual nine-syllable cataleptic lines (for the long lines), but it does lead the reader towards the expectation of a rhyme word at the end of the second line. At this point, there is no way of knowing for certain that the rhyme scheme is *ababcccb*: up to the word 'morrow's', one is led to supply the possibility of rhyming on 'light' and an *aa* rhyme scheme to start. It is only by reading the poem that the different expectancy patterns cohere to create the experience of reading a regular structure (even if this is the moment that Hardy decides to alternate stanza forms). Even in a simple stanza form, like Frost's 'Revelation', the reader uses the first two lines, and her/his knowledge of tradition, to conceive the *abab* structure:

We make ourselves a place apart
 Behind light words that tease and flout,
 But oh, the agitated heart
 Till someone really find us out. *CPPP 27*

Verses such as these engage mnemonic processes from the beginning of the reading, as the brain perceives the form and then continues to read and encode the forthcoming sounds as within a form.

The features Sidney outlined in his 'Defence' have since undergone scientific investigation. In 1973, Boomsliter and colleagues designed an experiment to see how far perception imposes internally-constructed patterns upon English metre. For my purposes, what is interesting about their work is its demonstration of the shared expectations readers have of poems. Boomsliter and colleagues took a pair of metrical stanzas, established an internal pattern or scheme and then measured it against a solo performance (reading) and a choral performance.²⁸⁷ It is this method of 'unled choral reading' which is of interest: it involves a group reading the text simultaneously, 'similar to "responsive reading" in church'.²⁸⁸ In this performance environment of unison, 'each speaker must use the pattern that he *expects* the others to impose', and what holds together is a strongly metrical performance.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁷While Boomsliter and colleagues make some questionable decisions regarding poetry, such as splicing together two Dickinson stanzas from separate poems, the overall experiment is illuminating.

²⁸⁸Paul C. Boomsliter, Warren Creel and George S. Hastings, Jr., 'Perception and English Poetic Meter', *PMLA*, 88.2 (1973): 200-08 (p. 201).

²⁸⁹Boomsliter, 'Perception and English Poetic Meter', p. 201 (original emphasis).

Each choral performance had a lower coefficient of variation than the solo performances, showing greater agreement upon the expected pattern. Boomsliter and colleagues focus particularly on the unanimity over the accented pauses in a reading (which they term ‘spacers’):

The positioning of the spacers in both stanzas is important. The speakers make expectancy patterns of the stanzas, and impose spacers accordingly, making four accent blocks in every line. When we speak of a stanza as an expectancy pattern we mean that the organization allows us to predict one part from another, and that in fact we do predict. The metrical stanza arouses expectation and then satisfies it.²⁹⁰

‘Spacers’, or pauses, occur to even out the measure and create an organised structure. In order to maintain togetherness, the authors point out that choral reading reduces extrametrical pauses while preserving spacers.²⁹¹ Extrametrical pauses are here established as those pauses which occur due to punctuation in places other than spacers. For instance, while a solo performance would preserve the mid-line pause in the Emily Dickinson line ‘You may have met him – did you not’, a choral performance smooths this over, avoiding individual variation. Readers appear to expect evenness within a metrical stanza, perhaps lending more novelty to those ‘extrametrical’ features, uncharacteristic of the pattern.

This paper sees metre as an anticipatory measure, defining the metrical effect as ‘an atmosphere of shaped expectation cast over a long span. It uses large expectancy schemes to arouse temporal expectation and then satisfy it’.²⁹² The expectancy effect of metre begins before the poem’s opening and lasts throughout the reading. As ‘The Voice’ shows, metre does not always satisfy its perimeters, but here metre serves as both a cache and a transmitter of expectations.

Writing in traditional metrical patterns is another way in which Hardy and Frost self-select out of the free verse movement, and this characteristic is germane to their poetry’s memorability. In understanding the mnemonics of oral traditions, Rubin writes at length on the importance of ‘rhythm’. He does not make the distinction from literary criticism between rhythm and metre, that the former is the variability of individual words, whereas the metre is the stable, underlying pattern of

²⁹⁰Boomsliter, ‘Perception and English Poetic Meter’, p. 203.

²⁹¹Boomsliter, ‘Perception and English Poetic Meter’, p. 203.

²⁹²Boomsliter, ‘Perception and English Poetic Meter’, p. 207.

stresses; therefore, he uses the term ‘rhythm’ for ‘metre’. Rubin’s *Theory of Remembering for Oral Traditions* marks metre out as the most significant constraint:

The poetic devices of rhyme, alliteration, and assonance work locally within lines and between nearby lines. Meaning and imagery also appear to function mostly in a local, serial fashion to limit choices and to increase the discriminability of items in memory. Of all the constraints discussed earlier in the book, rhythm is the most effective globally because the specific rhythm being used in the line or stanza being sung is usually the same specific rhythm that is used in all lines or stanzas. The local organization is the global organization.²⁹³

Here, Rubin stresses the pervasiveness of the metrical constraint as a constant. Metre provides a framework upon which other constraints may be overlaid to secure memory further. As Rubin is specifically discussing oral traditions (epic singers), he points out that ‘the demand to recall something rhythmically appropriate encourages something to be produced even when cue-item discriminability is low. In this way, rhythm functions to increase variation as well as stability’.²⁹⁴ Of course, in recalling the written verses of Hardy and Frost, one is not attempting to vary the words, but these constraints are not just aids which make their poetry particularly memorable, but also admit a level of variation that the free-versifiers might not anticipate. Hardy spoke against the idea that ‘the shortest way to good prose is by the route of good verse’, claiming

Anybody may test it for himself by taking any fine lines in verse and, casting off the fetters of metre and rhyme that seem to bind the poet, trying to express the same ideas more freely and accurately in prose. [...] it cannot be done: the words of the verse – fettered as he thought them – are the only words that will convey the ideas that were intended to be conveyed²⁹⁵

Constraint, here figured as ‘bindings’ and ‘fetters’, is intrinsic not only to poetry’s form, but to its expressive power.

This tripartite section demonstrates the expectancy effects of lineation, rhyme and metre. Their significance lies in recruiting short-term memory via attention and perception, providing a cognitive scaffolding upon which longer-term

²⁹³Rubin, *Memory In Oral Traditions*, p. 177.

²⁹⁴Rubin, *Memory In Oral Traditions*, p. 184.

²⁹⁵From “‘A Plea for Pure English” [Hardy’s speech as reported in *The Times*, June 4, 1912, p.7]’, (qtd in *Thomas Hardy’s Personal Writings*, ed. by Harold Orel, pp. 146-148 (p. 147)).

memory can be overlaid. Though unaware of the psychological dimensions of their practices, both Hardy and Frost seem particularly attuned to the manipulation of such mnemonic expectancy effects which are only now being understood by scientists.

Methinks we expect too much: Anti-metrical modernism

‘when human beings are undergoing fears, joys, passions or emotions
they do not really retire to studies and compose in words jigsaw puzzles:
they relieve their minds by rhythmical utterances’
– Ford Madox Ford²⁹⁶

In writing in metrical forms at the historical moment when they were being rejected, Hardy and Frost made a statement about the kind of poets they were. Their verses tied them to a previous tradition and advertised their defiance of the new movement. As soon as Hardy and Frost put words into metre, they announced their status as traditional poets. Though Frost’s anti-modernist stance was intentional and public, Hardy was more cautious. As biographer Martin Seymour-Smith writes, ‘in setting himself up as a poet he was taking a prodigious risk in terms of literary status’: poetry had been a more or less private hobby until 1898.²⁹⁷ Although Hardy, unlike Frost, may not have wanted a public persona for his poetry, the free verse movement highlighted his status as a traditional versifier. In a book otherwise dedicated to the modernist move from rhyme, Wesling pairs Hardy and Frost for renewing ‘the rhyming quatrain, a form that had been often slack after the triumphant variations of *In Memoriam*’; their use of devices became a defining characteristic.²⁹⁸ Hardy’s ‘Apology’ and other Prefaces to his collections are an index of his anxiety about the reception of his poems.

This concern is easily understood when looking at Ford Madox Ford’s ‘Notes for a Lecture on Vers Libre’. He speaks unambiguously against traditional versification:

[The recited poetry] went on and on – and on! A long, rolling stream, of words no-one would ever use, to endless monotonous, polysyllabic,

²⁹⁶Qtd. in Max Saunders, *Ford Madox Ford: A Dual Life. Vol.2, The After-War World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 85.

²⁹⁷Martin Seymour-Smith, *Hardy* (London: Bloomsbury, 1994), p. 570.

²⁹⁸Wesling, *The Chances of Rhyme*, p. 33.

unchanging rhythms, in which rhymes went unmeaningly by like the telegraph posts, every fifty yards, of a railway journey.²⁹⁹

The accumulation of clauses mirrors the cloying effect of excess material. This takes into account two of the major tenets of traditional versification: metre ('unchanging rhythms') and rhyme. Ford's metaphor exposes these constraints as too controlling, where expectation is secured so fast to the form that its features become as anticipated as 'telegraph posts'. The exactness of metrical measurement is transfigured into physical distance, as passenger Ford knows he will see a post 'every fifty yards'. This makes measurement negative, but Patmore had used the same type of image in defending metre, where a beat 'like the post in a chain railing, shall mark the end of one space, and the commencement of another'.³⁰⁰ Again, the problem is how evident and how regular this measurement is.

This notion of a surfeit of expectation in metrical poems can be believed (and is evidenced by the weaker verse of both Hardy and Frost); a poem can be phonologically simple and lose its effect. Frost knew this, as suggested by this seeming critique of Edwin Arlington Robinson:

I remember the pleasure with which Pound and I laughed over the fourth
'thought' in

Miniver thought and thought and thought
And thought about it.

Three 'thoughts' would've been 'adequate' as the critical praise-word then was. There would have been nothing to complain of if it had been left at three. The fourth made the intolerable touch of poetry. With the fourth the fun began.³⁰¹

²⁹⁹Qtd. in *Critical Writings of Ford Madox Ford*, p. 157.

³⁰⁰Coventry Patmore, 'English Metrical Critics', p. 136. More akin to Ford, the author of 'In Defence of Rhyme', the *TLS* article from which Hardy quotes in his notebooks worries that rhyme 'is something arbitrary and irrational, imposed upon verse to make it more difficult, like the bunkers of a golf course' (*LNT2*, p. 388).

³⁰¹From 'Introduction to King Jasper (1935)' (*CPRF*, pp. 116-22 (p. 119)). The whole stanza from Robinson's 'Miniver Cheevy' reads:

Miniver scorned the gold he sought,
But sore annoyed was he without it;
Miniver thought, and thought, and thought,
And thought about it.

The extract chosen is from Robinson's famous poem 'Miniver Cheevy', which is written entirely in iambic tetrameter quatrains; when the regular iambic tolling of 'and thought' becomes too much, it becomes laughable. It seems that Frost and Pound share the opinion of the metre being overdone, of regularity gone wrong. The 'intolerable touch of poetry' here, one presumes, is an affectation which tips over into foolishness. This fits with Ford's later complaint that 'If you write a decasyllabic, rhymed, eight-lined verse a certain percentage of it *must* be fake. [...] You will write *doth love* instead of *loves* is so as to fill up the line [...] that sort of thing'.³⁰² Given that this period also saw the rise of metrical mnemonics in education, the modernists might also have seen metre and rhyme as simply information-organising cues for recitation and drills.³⁰³ There is a deterministic quality to traditional versification where form becomes conformity. However, this is a negative view of metrical constraints, aided by the loaded word 'fake'. Every metrical poem is influenced by its form, but this does not have to make it 'fake'. As seen from the psychological studies mentioned, certain properties of poetry naturally appeal to the brain. Where I cannot agree with Ford, then, is that even when it is badly handled by a poet, 'rhymes went unmeaningly by'. Rhyme is never 'unmeaning', since it is (consciously or not) a way of organising meaning within the brain; the phonological coding of rhyme allows the reader to perceive patterns. As seen in poems like Frost's 'Acquainted with the Night' and Hardy's 'The Convergence of the Twain', rhyme can be an intrinsic part of the portrayal of a particular situation, the repetition is drawn on for what it can mean.

Wesling characterises failed rhymes as those in which the balance between the cognitive and the aesthetic is unevenly weighted:

If we conceive the poem, any poem, as a fabric worked up from the mutual interference of an aesthetic and a cognitive principle, it will follow that we should see each of these two principles trying to reduce the other to matter. [...] In failed rhyming] the cognitive principle is overpowering and reduces the aesthetics to language matter. The flagrant rhyme draws attention to its overdetermination.³⁰⁴

³⁰²Qtd. in *Critical Writings of Ford Madox Ford*, p. 161 (original emphasis).

³⁰³See Martin, *The Rise and Fall of Meter* (2012) and Robson, *Heartbeats* (2012).

³⁰⁴Wesling, *The Chances of Rhyme*, p. 81. In this, Wesling is indebted to Jan M Meijer's 'Verbal Art as Interference' in *Structure of Texts and Semiotics of Culture*, eds. by Jan Van der Eng and Mojmir Grygar (The Hague; Paris: Mouton, 1973), pp. 313-48.

Again, the argument revolves around how far a poem is noticeably determined – a rigid adherence to a set form, though cognitively comprehensible, has little artistic merit. Neither principle can hold its own without the other’s support. Elsewhere, Wesling argues that ‘in admirable rhymed poems, there is a very high degree of unexpectedness in the intermittent shock when we discover a discourse, which seems natural, is in fact overdetermined by a line of devices of equivalence’; devices, then, should both go unnoticed and noticed.³⁰⁵ Apart from his use of ‘cognitive’, what is interesting about Wesling’s work is that in his literary-critical study, he takes into account psychology and that ‘the spans of immediate and long-term memory impose severe limits on the amount of information we are able to receive and remember’.³⁰⁶ Wesling’s understanding of rhyme processing, indeed of reading, is predicated on an interface between the cognitive and the cultural.

No formal aspect of a poem is meaningless, since it is an integral part of the structure. Returning to Frost’s critique of Robinson, he admits that

There is more to it than the number of the ‘thoughts.’ There is the way the last one turns up by surprise round the corner, the way the shape of the stanza is played with, the easy way the obstacle of verse is turned to advantage. The mischief is in it. CPRF 119

Although the ‘Introduction to *King Jasper*’ is uneven in its praise of Robinson, this is a moment of genuine admiration. ‘Mischief’ is something which Frost always looked to cause, being the poet of ‘Mending Wall’’s ‘Spring is the mischief in me’ (CPPP 39) and advertising one of his own poems as ‘this has mischief in it’.³⁰⁷ This compliment relates specifically to a kind of expectation which only poetry can create: that of lineation. Robinson may repeat to the tune of four iambs, but his line break means ‘the last one turns up by surprise round the corner’ – the spatial awareness within the stanza creates this surprise.³⁰⁸ Frost’s laugh is borne of admiration that Robinson pushes the reader so far in expectation and gets away with

³⁰⁵Wesling, *The Chances of Rhyme*, p. 72.

³⁰⁶Wesling, *The Chances of Rhyme*, p. 75. Here Wesling even references the magical 7±2 of short-term memory (see the methodology of my introduction).

³⁰⁷James Sitar, “‘Sometimes It Seems As If’: A Talk by Robert Frost October 23, 1947”, *Literary Imagination*, 10.1 (2008): 1-14 <doi:10.1093/litimag/imm127> (p. 11).

³⁰⁸Robert Francis confirms Frost’s admiration for the four ‘thought’s, noting that ‘as a fine example of form Mr. Frost read aloud Robinson’s “Miniver Cheevy.” He especially admires the lines [Francis here quotes the ‘He thought’ etc.]’ (*Frost: A Time to Talk. Conversations & Indiscretions Recorded by Robert Francis* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1973), p. 74).

this ‘mischief’ or ‘fun’.³⁰⁹ Unlike Ford, Frost does not see form as limiting. Indeed, there is an ‘easy way’ in which ‘the obstacle of verse is turned to advantage’.

Although an obstacle may impede something, it does not prevent it from coming to fruition. More akin to psychologist Rubin than modernist Ford, Frost sees poetry’s various constraints and expectancy patterns as methods of delighting the reader.

Frost was singularly proud of his own tussles with the ‘obstacle of verse’. One characteristic of Frost’s verse is not just the inclusion of speech, but the interplay between speech and metre for several lines, even a whole poem. In a letter of 1914 to John Cournos, Frost explains,

It is as simple as this: there are the very regular preestablished accent and measure of blank verse; and there are the very irregular accent and measure of speaking intonation. I am never more pleased than when I can get these into strained relation. I like to drag and break the intonation across the metre as waves first comb and then break stumbling on the shingle.

CPPP 680

This versification is the collision of the expected (the ‘preestablished’ metre) and the unexpected (everyday speech). This suggests that metre, being already decided upon and ‘known’ by readers, activates long-term memory. Ironically, despite everyone’s greater exposure to speech, this cannot be ‘preestablished’ as its accents are too unpredictable and locally variable. Nowhere in this passage is an argument made for the eligibility of this match: to Frost it is self-evident, because it brings the ‘strained relation’ that he seeks. The violence Frost is prepared to force from his words is present in the dynamic verbs ‘drag’ and ‘break’.³¹⁰ In a later notebook entry, Frost would determine that poetry’s effect is derived from neither the rhythm nor the metre, ‘but a ^distinct^ tune arising from the one being struck sharply across the other. Witness all the poems that ever survived their ~~time~~ age’.³¹¹ Again there is an explicit violence to versification, but in the Cournos letter the rhythm is that of speech, the most characteristic equation of Frostian versification (speech against

³⁰⁹Frost himself repeats simple diction for effect: the ‘don’t’s of ‘Home Burial’, for instance.

³¹⁰Indeed, in a 1915 letter to Walter Prichard Eaton, Frost claims that poetry is ‘none the worse for a little rough handling once in a while. Do it a violence, I say, if you have to make it aware of what’s going on around it’ (*LRF1*, p. 328). He also admired this quality in others: writing in 1924 about Grace Fallow Norton’s poetry, Frost notes ‘You must have known I would like the way Miss Norton throws and all but breaks the accents of speech across the accents of her meter’ (*LRF2*, p. 399).

³¹¹MS 1178, Notebook c.1930-1940, fol. 27r. ^^ indicates that Frost added this in above his established line.

metre gives strained relation).³¹² Frost later versified this sentiment, that ‘The tune is not that metre, not that rhythm, | But a resultant that arises from them’ (*CPPP* 469). This time, though, Frost would add ‘Free verse leaves out the metre and makes up | For the deficiency by church intoning’.³¹³ The loss of metre leaves a poem deficient for making the kind of music for which Frost aimed.

While Pound’s circle ‘make it new’ by discarding old forms, Frost advocates a continuation, and exacerbation, of the Wordsworthian ideals in the ‘Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*’. Everyday language is pitted against poetic form and Frost later boasted that ‘I dropped to an everyday level of diction that even Wordsworth kept above’ (*LRF1* 132). Frost is aware of the ‘very regular’ nature of verse and thus of its expected patterns. He noticeably derives satisfaction – ‘I like’, ‘I am never more pleased’ (in the Curnos letter) – from upsetting the balance between his two components. Wordsworth was not the only model for Frost’s collision of metre and speech. While Frost would make it seem self-determined, this was a contemporary debate: Henry Newbolt insisted in 1912 that poetry ‘has always been [...] an antagonism, a balance, a compromise, between the metrical ictus [...] and the common speech-rhythm of the language’.³¹⁴ While Frost’s innovation is in emphasising the ‘tones’ of speech which ‘were before words were’, his famous formulation ‘They are only lovely when thrown and drawn and displayed across spaces of the footed line’ reworks Newbolt’s ‘most of the beauty of the lines and all their variety is gained by the skill with which the woof of speech-rhythm is continually thrown athwart the warp of the metrical type’.³¹⁵ Both men see versification as craftsmanship within a given space. Though Frost never credits

³¹²Frost reformulated this particular expression many times, but kept returning to the ‘strain’ within metrical poetry. In a single 1959 interview, Frost uses the following comparisons for the relationship between metre and [speech] rhythm: ‘it reminds me of a donkey and a donkey cart; for some of the time the cart is on the tugs and some of the time on the hold-backs’; ‘what’s the good of the rhythm unless it is on something that trips it – that it ruffles? You know, it’s got to ruffle the meter’; ‘I want something there – the other thing – something to hold and something for me to put a strain on’; ‘neither the meter nor the rhythm; it’s a tune arising from the stress on those – same as your fingers on the strings, you know. The twang! [...] The twang of one on the other’ (qtd. in *Robert Frost on Writing*, pp. 156-59). One further analogy is given in a letter of 1925: ‘All I ask is iambic. I undertake to furnish the variety in the relation of my tones to it. The crossed swords are always the same. The sword dancer varies his position between them’ (*LRF2*, p. 486).

³¹³Frost gets away with his insults by voicing a King’s song (the poem is ‘How Hard It Is to Keep from Being King When It’s in You and in the Situation’ from *In the Clearing*). Frost further determines that ‘Free verse so called is really cherished prose, | Prose made of, given an air by church intoning. | It has its beauty, only I don’t write it’ (*CPPP*, p. 469).

³¹⁴Henry Newbolt, ‘A New Study of English Poetry’, *English Review*, 10 (1912): 657-72 (p. 662).

³¹⁵*LRF1*, p. 355; Newbolt, ‘A New Study’, p. 663. Frost’s letter is from 1915, three years after Newbolt’s article.

Newbolt with any genesis of thought, they had met and Frost was at least in a milieu where the relation of speech to metre was actively discussed.³¹⁶

The drama of Frost's poetic content or narrative is heightened by the internal, formal drama he creates through this 'strained relation': the conversational freedom of the vernacular finds itself 'stumbling on the shingle' of traditional metre, as it hits upon unexpected stresses.³¹⁷ Readers with prior experience of metre (which Frost expects) apply their long-term memory, so that as it works cognitively, cultural memory of poetry is also brought to bear on the reading. Bridges also notes how metre lends emphasis to certain words, since 'the same syllabic rhythms acquire different values according to their place in the line'.³¹⁸ Metre has 'power over the hidden possibilities of speech', says Bridges, something Frost had more than demonstrated by 1922.³¹⁹ Even a single line of 'Home Burial' becomes more dramatic though the iambic pentameter of the poem:

He said to gain time: 'What is it you see,'
Mounting until she cowered under him.
'I will find out now – you must tell me, dear.'

CPPP 55

The actions of the husband ensure tension is already 'mounting', but the structure of the lines gives added provocation. His words are monosyllabic, the diction simple, but the threat of the last line here is derived in part from the metre. Without the metrical context, there is nothing to beat against, but within the iambic pentameter it suddenly has a decisive caesura, which splits the line precisely in two. The tag term of endearment becomes an awkward completion of a line otherwise removed from the compassionate. The effect of conversation is further explored in Chapter 3, but

³¹⁶See *LRF1*, p. 107 and p. 137 fn. 157. Meyers also puts Newbolt among Frost's acquaintance (*Robert Frost: A Biography*, p. 378). Unlike Frost, Hardy was a 'long-time friend of Newbolt' (see Taylor, *Hardy's Metres*, p. 33). See also Martin's fourth chapter (*The Rise and Fall*, pp. 109-44) on Newbolt's metrical influence, particularly as it relates to propaganda.

³¹⁷Marie Boroff has written about this in terms of sound symbolism, that 'Frost loved the intonations of the spoken language and incorporated them again and again into memorable sentence sounds. But he also loved the English poetry of the past' 'Sound Symbolism as Drama in the Poetry of Robert Frost', *PMLA*, 107.1 (1992): 131-44 (p. 141)). Boroff calls these two 'the language of the chanting voice and the language of the speaking voice' and claims '[the relation between them takes on dramatic significance' (p. 135).

³¹⁸Bridges, 'A Lecture on Free Verse', p. 657.

³¹⁹Bridges offers two lines of *Paradise Lost*, Book 2, in blank verse and then rewritten in free verse in order to prove that 'in writing and reading them thus, the value of the word far is lost' ('A Lecture on Free Verse', p. 657, original emphasis).

already it is obvious that Frost uses these different traditions of rhythm to create and unsettle expectations.

‘Home Burial’ contends with its metre and this is precisely what Hardy exploits in ‘The Voice’. The (over)abundance of regularity in Hardy’s work makes his sudden irregularity shocking and, though not a modernist, Hardy makes metre anew. Analysing the figure of the revenant in Hardy’s poetry, Patricia Clements establishes that

In repetition, the mind’s stiff patterning can be shattered as it cannot be in experience which involves no very rigid expectation. Ordinary experience in time can merely confirm or extend or amplify or qualify a hypothetical order, but repetition can submit an achieved pattern to total judgement. [...] Since it can result in a complete destruction of pattern and order, can leave a returning figure naked of artifice, there is a sense in which repetition can offer the only really new experience.³²⁰

While this is not strictly about form, it foregrounds repetition’s possibilities and points again to the perceived violence involved in breaking pattern. As Frost said, ‘There is no objection to repetition of the right kind’, meaning that which offers effect. Somewhat disparaging church services, Frost decries ‘the long line of “Nows” [...] The repetition became tiresome. I knew just when to expect a “Now”’ (*CPPP* 687). Deceptively simple, repetition needs crafting if it is to work. Without repetition, without expectation, ‘The Voice’ cannot have impact on the reader. It is by working within set forms that Hardy and Frost gain the element of surprise: ‘shattering’ is only possible through first patterning the reader’s mind – free verse has its own version of anticipation and disappointment, but it cannot be as immediately disorientating in its loss.

Throughout Hardy’s and Frost’s, work, traditional versification is employed to create expectancy patterns which can then be altered. The control with which these poets manipulate form at the historical moment when others lost faith in its capacities, shows its possibilities. Whether it be as shocking an alteration as ‘The Voice’’s final stanza, or as uniform as blocks of iambic pentameter, Hardy and Frost interact with poetic expectations. While they may look, sound and be remembered as

³²⁰Patricia Clements, “‘Unlawful Beauty’: Order and Things in Hardy’s Poems”, in *The Poetry of Thomas Hardy*, eds. by Patricia Clements and Juliet Grindle (London: Vision, 1980), pp. 137-54 (p. 140).

always keeping their versified promises, their subtlety in dodging regularity is why their verse is remembered.

Formal freedoms

‘In the period between present action and future recall, memory does not wait patiently
in its safe house; it has its own energy and is exposed to a process of transformation’
– Aleida Assman³²¹

In a frustrating archival fragment, Frost appears to write ‘Poem is an expectation [*sic*] and a series of expedencies [*sic*]’.³²² Using his most illegible handwriting, Frost allows for expectation as being at the heart of verse as a discipline. Rather than a dogmatic approach to metre, Hardy and Frost adopt more the perspective of Patmore, who decides ‘the language should always seem to *feel*, but not to *suffer from* the bonds of verse’.³²³ Hardy and Frost prove that freedom does not have to mean a casting off of metre entire, but a flexible approach to the medium of verse, which embraces the (un)usual and the (ab)normal. As this chapter shows, ‘expectation’ is a term shared by the supposedly separate worlds of prosodic theory and psychology, which need considering together for the differing nature of poetry’s various expectations to be understood.

When expectations are seen as part of verse’s mnemonic, it points towards a crucial characteristic of (human) memory: it is never still. Memory, fixed as the noun sounds, is experienced as remembering, active, fluid, subject to movement. Psychologist Alan Baddeley points out that ‘it is tempting to assume that because we remember an incident that happened 20 years ago, we are accessing a 20-year-old memory’. However, if it has been recalled in the meantime ‘we will have practised and rehearsed the memory, and at worst we may be remembering not the event itself but our later reconstruction of it’.³²⁴ Like Assman’s epigraph (from the discipline of memory studies), Baddeley emphasises the lack of fixity to memory, even if it is commonly considered a stable entity. Poems are a type of artificial memory, keeping material in a stable form outside of the brain and body. Artificial memories can ‘preserve’ memories, but as soon as a human brain interacts with this stimulus,

³²¹Aleida Assman, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Arts of Memory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 19.

³²²Robert Frost, MS 1178, ‘Prose, Fragments’, Box 19 Folder 101.

³²³Patmore, ‘English Metrical Critics’, p. 131 (original emphasis).

³²⁴Baddeley, *Your Memory*, p. 140.

changeability, contingency and chance come into play. Poetry's mixture of freedom and fixity with regards expectation is a microcosmic version of memory's own tussle.

Hardy and Frost's poems remember past metrical forms as much as individual memories. As Meredith Martin asserts 'Metrical forms circulate, change, and accrue different meanings at different moments', a process which was unusually active at the time Hardy and Frost were writing.³²⁵ While this chapter has uncovered the cognitive principles underscoring metre, metre is a form of cultural memory itself, transmitting patterns from the past. In his assessment of Hardy, Taylor makes a similar point:

Hardy achieved [...] an accentual-syllabic form peculiarly consistent with a world in flux. [...] Forms lose the life which sustains them, life loses the forms which make it memorable. As with life, so too with language. Metrical form and current speech rhythms can never be identical. The patterns language assumes are momentary, they grow out of one time configuration of mind and reality, they grow old, they bind us for a while in their obsolescing frames. In his metrical rhythms, Hardy captures the resonance of the life and death of forms.³²⁶

Taylor reminds us of the evolution of language, much as I have emphasised memory's own evolutions, and of language's 'obsolescing frames': language patterns, too, are subject to forgetting. However, I see Hardy's and Frost's engagements with metrical memory as sounding less of a death knell than Taylor implies. That 'metrical form and current speech rhythms can never be identical' provides Frost with the possibility of 'strained relation', of linguistic frisson. By writing formal verse, provide readers with mnemonic experiences in real-time (as they attend to the expectancy patterns) and remembered experience of times past written in passing or past forms.

While different groups sought to redefine poetry at the turn of the twentieth century, Hardy and Frost quietly continued certain traditions, and subtly shifted others: both men tested poetic boundaries and strained those forms for which they would become remembered. Pound, Ford and others set up a somewhat false dichotomy between expectation and value, and in doing so created another such

³²⁵Martin, *The Rise and Fall*, p. 203.

³²⁶Taylor, *Hardy's Metres*, p. 121.

dichotomy between memorability and value.³²⁷ Too much of the familiar (in image, form, sound) could be classed as stagnant, but the nature of ‘too much’ was in question.³²⁸ There is a spectrum of value regarding the poetry of this period, and the example of the Georgians proves that too much expectation does lead to less valued poetry. However, Hardy and Frost walk a middle ground between Georgianism and modernism, exploiting expectation for mnemonic effect and remaining within the public and critical readerships. As Hynes puts it, the Hardy tradition is ‘conservative, but inventive’.³²⁹ The best poems are neither wholly anticipated nor wholly unlikely, but are composed within the realms of the convergences and divergences expectation-laden traditions afford the artist, like Patmore’s ‘best poet [...] who, in his verse, preserves everywhere the living sense of metre, not so much by unvarying obedience to, as by innumerable small departures from, its *modulus*’.³³⁰ In looking again at the question of memorability and what gives poetry its lasting power, expectation has a certain amount of recognisable value.

³²⁷Since the advent of *vers libre*, some poets and critics have put emphasis on difficulty as a value-marker in poetry, again consequently devaluing memorability.

³²⁸Taylor asks virtually this question (from another angle) in relation to Hardy’s poetry: ‘when does a line exceed the metrical expectation so much that it seems to stumble awkwardly? Can this violation be distinguished from an interesting variation?’ (*Hardy’s Metres*, p. 31).

³²⁹Samuel Hynes, ‘The Hardy Tradition’, p. 50.

³³⁰Patmore, ‘English Metrical Critics’, p. 131 (original emphasis).

CHAPTER 2 –

Seeing it again: Recognition and recognition memory

‘A word about recognition: In literature it is our business to give people the thing that will make them say, “Oh yes I know what you mean.” It is never to tell them something they don’t know, but something they know and hadn’t thought of saying. It must be something they recognize.’

– Letter from Robert Frost to John T. Bartlett, February 1914³³¹

As Frost’s letter makes clear, the business of literature is bound up with the business of recognition: the ability to see, understand or know something better as a result of memory. Frost emphasises the contract of the writer’s relationship with the reader: it ‘must be’ this, it can ‘never’ be otherwise (like the ‘habits of association’ Hardy-via-Wordsworth contract from Chapter 1). This links with expectation in poetry and the giving of certain reference points to the reader. Indeed, expectation relies on recognition: expectancy patterns occur when aural or visual information is noticed in its recurrence. Both Hardy and Frost wrote poems which were traditionally recognisable as ‘poetry’, with their metrical patterns, rhyme schemes and rural imagery.³³² To an extent, they can be seen as adhering to the idea that the reader should recognise some features, to shore up expectation for effect. Even the modernist movement, extolling newness, relies on recognition. Pound’s 1935 exhortation to ‘make it new’ implies a redistributing of effect rather than complete novelty.³³³ The ‘it’ has to be a stable concept of poetry past, and modernism’s novelty can involve breathing new life into old forms.

In this February 1914 letter, there is clear evidence that Frost was thinking about poetry in terms of recognition. More famous for expounding his doctrine of sentence-sounds, the letter goes on to exemplify recognition:

A Patch of Old Snow

³³¹*LRF1*, p. 174.

³³²Bridges notes that it is from ‘their markedly different rhythmical effects’ with two given passages ‘one of which we recognize as prose and the other as verse’ (‘A Lecture on Free Verse’, p. 649).

³³³As Michael North points out, Pound’s use of this phrase comes to readers through translations of ancient texts and therefore ‘impl[ies] a complete history of the concept of novelty’ (‘The Making of “Make It New”’, *Guernica: A Magazine of Art & Politics*, 15 August 2013).

In the corner of the wall where the bushes haven't been trimmed, there is a patch of old snow like a blow-away newspaper that has come to rest there. And it is dirty as with the print and news of a day I have forgotten, if I ever read it.

Now that is no good except for what I may call certain points of recognition in it: patch of old snow in a corner of the wall – you know what that is. You know what a blow-away newspaper is. You know the curious dirt on old snow and last of all you know how easily you forget what you read in the papers.

LRF1 174

Retaining his position of teacher (Bartlett was a former pupil), Frost exemplifies his point, offering a prose version of the poem which would be published in the 1916 collection *Mountain Interval* as 'A Patch of Old Snow'. This letter unpacks Frost's poetic practice, suggesting that as well as trying to cultivate a speaking voice, he is also concerned with offering enough that is recognisable to bait the reader. Frost lists four 'points of recognition' in his letter, the co-ordinates which guarantee the reader's safe navigation. In creating a situation that is familiar to the reader, Frost appeals to knowledge born of experience, to memory. As Chapter 3 explores, much of this is predicated on the spoken word: this observation comes in a letter largely concerned with writing the spoken; the process of recognition is one intended to make the reader vocalise, 'to make them say, "Oh yes I know what you mean"'.

There is supposed to be a direct connection between the words on the page and the reader's imaginings, but the understanding borne of reading a poem is neither entirely from memory nor entirely invented: reading should be a dynamic interaction between the two, creating a kind of *déjà vu*, in which the novel is also familiar. If Pound thought artistic expression should be 'made new', then perhaps Frost was opting to 'make the familiar new'.³³⁴ It is another example of how Frost sees the usefulness of memory and its purpose within poetry. Frost's 1914 letter also comes in the wake of contemporary theorising about recognition. In 1911, philosopher Henri Bergson's *Matter and Memory* was published in English, Chapter 2 grappling with 'the Recognition of Images: Memory and Brain'. Indeed, Bergson describes 'the utilizing of past experience for present action' as 'recognition, in

³³⁴Frost later lectured on the notion that poetry is 'the renewal of words. Good writing is the renewal of language' (*Robert Frost Speaking on Campus: Excerpts from His Talks 1949-1962*, ed. Edward Connery Lathem (New York; London: W. W. Norton, 2009), p. 32, original emphasis).

short'.³³⁵ What is learned from experience and usefully (or not) applied to the present is pertinent to both Hardy's and Frost's versified recognitions.

This chapter looks at recognition, a complex concept in any discipline, from several angles, beginning with an exploration of psychological definitions. I use the term 'anagnorisis' for more literary-based forms of recognition, but Frost's and Hardy's work demands a range of perspectives, including psychological and epistemological. Recognition scenes in drama often involve identifying another person. Like the Greek dramatists before him, Shakespeare considers what is required to recognise another human being after a prolonged absence. Hardy and Frost deal with nothing so absolute or simple: they seek to recognise the past *as* past, what is truly present, or what represents the truth of an event at all. Lawrance Thompson, though, does claim that Frostian recognition is 'closely related to the recognition-scene, so long a source of surprise and emotional tension in dramatic narratives'.³³⁶ Anagnorisis is traditionally confined to (tragic) drama, by virtue of Aristotle, and largely to visual identification. However, the broader definition of this term, as the move from ignorance to knowledge made in a revelatory moment, has unbounded literary significance. Somewhat separate from anagnorisis, another category of literary recognition is revelation, something both sought and denied by Hardy and Frost.

Keeping a psychological definition of recognition in mind, anagnorisis is studied specifically as a mental process – whatever external influences catalyse and bear on this change, it is an internal figuration of the individual subject. Moving from scientific observations which outline the principles that stand behind poetic depictions of recognition, this chapter explores Frost's own semi-scientific understanding of recognition before looking at the peculiar condition of belatedness in Hardy's verse. Belatedness here refers to the Hardyean trope of recognising that understanding has arrived past the point of being able to act on it. After considering Hardy's desperation to recognise, I look at how and why Frost in particular

³³⁵Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. by Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004), p. 87. It is not known whether or not Hardy read *Matter and Memory*. He certainly read the copy of *Creative Evolution* which Caleb Saleeby lent him, and took Bergson to task on certain points (see 5.69, 5.78-79, 5.84). I mention Bergson here to show contemporaneous thinking on recognition which was within the knowledge of Hardy's milieu, if not his own reading. See Tyler Hoffman for Frost's reading of Bergson and his indebtedness to Bergson's ideas (*Politics*, pp. 29-31).

³³⁶*Fire and Ice*, p. 24.

maintains ambiguity even within the recognition process, as a means of stimulating the reader's imaginative input. Finally, I detail Hardy's and Frost's characteristic subversions of recognition as they distort previously accepted knowledge.

Recognition: Psychological standpoints

‘there is recognition when, an object being re-presented,
we feel, judge, or “know” it to be old’
– F. C. Bartlett³³⁷

Firstly, it is necessary to explain the specific characteristics of recognition and why ‘recognition memory’ is categorically separate. Within psychology, the two well-defined types of memory are recall and recognition; indeed, researchers test these two operations with different questioning. Recall involves remembering something wilfully, where the sole prompt is the intention to remember. In contrast, ‘the essence of a recognition test’, notes Brown, ‘is that one or more potential targets are presented to the subject’.³³⁸ Unlike recall, which requires a subject to generate a memory for her/himself, recognition is an alternative model of remembering which involves identifying something as previously encountered (by aligning present experience with past experience). In his landmark paper of 1980, Mandler comments on the ‘apparent asymmetry of recall and recognition processes. In the former, the context is present and a missing event is sought; in recognition, the event is given and the appropriate context (setting, list) needs to be found’.³³⁹ It is interesting that, for Mandler, the context ‘needs to be found’: if recognition announces a context, then there is an anxiety inherent in the necessity of linking up the information. This sense of ‘needing’ an answer pervades Hardy's and Frost's poetry.

Querying the nature of recognition has a historical basis in psychology. Contemporary with an elderly Hardy and a young Frost, Arthur Allin published his “‘Recognition-Theory” of Perception’, which accounted ‘no distinction between recognition and perception, at least in kind’.³⁴⁰ In aligning recognition and

³³⁷Bartlett, *Remembering*, p. 187.

³³⁸John Brown, ‘An Analysis of Recognition and Recall and of Problems in their Comparison’, in *Recall and Recognition*, ed. by John Brown (London; New York; Sydney; Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, 1976), pp. 1-35 (p.1).

³³⁹‘Recognizing: The Judgment of Previous Occurrence’, *Psychological Review*, 87.3 (1980): 252-71, (p. 258).

³⁴⁰‘The “Recognition-Theory” of Perception’, *The American Journal of Psychology*, 7: 2 (1896): 237-248 (p. 237).

perception, Allin makes recognition seem more immediate and surface-based (since perception is generally seen as preceding, or at least forming the very initial stages of, memory). This article catalysed a dialogue between Allin and Mary W. Calkins, whose review sought to clarify and criticise certain points. Even at this early stage of psychological theorising on the subject, the authors begin to make distinctions within the process of recognition itself. Full recognition would enable a subject to place the recognised material in context: this lady is Jane; she is John's sister; I met her at the wedding. However, Calkins notes that a degree of recognition is afforded in simply knowing that you have seen 'this lady' before. This one term 'recognition' is pressed to cover both the latter noun phrase (offering no contextual possibilities) and the former whole fact-giving sentence. As Calkins writes, 'immediate recognition is marked by an absence of accompanying definite associations', the modifier 'immediate' needed to separate it from recognition more generally.³⁴¹ If an Aristotelian, literary definition of recognition were to be brought to bear, then recognition should offer the transition from ignorance to knowledge. Recognition in its complete form brings a certain amount of resolution, a kind not offered by an 'immediate recognition' which fails to synthesise other associations. Poetry can go beyond a bare recognition to explore the emotional and cultural resonances which accompany real-life recognitions. As Frost's epigraph suggests, poetic recognition initiates a renewed understanding of something already half-familiar.

The difficulties of discriminating recognition can also be seen in F. C. Bartlett's *Remembering* (1932). As the section epigraph highlights, the problem with recognition is that 'we feel' it – an unshakeable but indeterminate 'feeling', something almost physiological that is troublesome for psychological measurement(s). Indeed, part of Allin's terminology is the awkwardly expressed feeling of 'pastness or the known-again-ness of objects'.³⁴² Similarly, William James bemoans the fact that although something can inspire 'this inarticulate feeling of their familiarity so deep into our consciousness that we are fairly shaken by its mysterious emotional power [...] the only name we have for all its shadings is

³⁴¹Mary Whiton Calkins, 'The Recognition-Theory of Perception. Recognition', *Psychological Review*, 3.3 (1896): 344-7 (345).

³⁴²'Recognition', *Psychological Review*, 3.5 (1896): 542-45 (542).

“sense of familiarity””.³⁴³ Recognition is strongly felt, but difficult to characterise in text, at least for psychologists.

Building on earlier work, Bartlett admits that the early stage of recognition owes little to complex processing, but equally that ‘nobody can understand recognition by confining his attention to what happens at the moment of recognition’.³⁴⁴ This ‘moment of recognition’ (like Calkins’ ‘immediate recognition’) is orchestrated by former occurrences: a sighting of the actual target, a similar subject which the mind associates with it – this accumulation of information within memory allows the target to be recognised later. Bartlett raises the point that recognition as experienced in the present leaves much of the process invisible. If the ‘moment of recognition’ is the iceberg above water, then the past looms large underneath the surface. To ‘know [something] again’ in its entirety requires more than just a sense of feeling that it is old. Like the immediate expectancy patterns created by individual line-endings in a poem and the sediment of cultural expectations of poetic metre, recognition, too, has different levels of operation.

The first division made in memory was between recall and recognition, called the ‘two-stage or two-process theory’.³⁴⁵ This assumes that ‘Recall involves a search or retrieval process based on the appropriateness of the retrieved information’, while ‘recognition involves only the second of these processes’, suggesting that recognition is a less fallible subset of recall, since it involves only one stage.³⁴⁶ This has been cited as the reason for recognition’s superiority over recall, that in laboratory testing, ‘after three unsuccessful attempts to recall a word, recognition can be well above chance’.³⁴⁷ The two processes also need distinguishing for an odd oppositional characteristic called the frequency paradox: ‘highly frequent words are better recalled than less frequent words, but are less well recognized’.³⁴⁸ This seems unusual, given that much of memory is based on strength of trace (the higher the frequency, the stronger the trace), but Brown explains that ‘if recognition is based on familiarity, the occurrence of a high-frequency word in a list would have only a

³⁴³James, *Principles*, p. 244.

³⁴⁴Bartlett, *Remembering*, p. 192.

³⁴⁵Michael W. Eysenck and Mark Keane eds., *Cognitive Psychology: A Student’s Handbook*, 4th edn. (Hove: Psychology Press, 2000), p. 175. Two-stage or two-process theories are also referred to as ‘generate-recognize models’.

³⁴⁶Eysenck, *Cognitive Psychology*, p. 175.

³⁴⁷Brown, ‘An Analysis of Recognition and Recall’, p. 24.

³⁴⁸Alan Baddeley, *Human Memory: Theory and Practice*, Rev. ed. (Hove: Psychology Press, 1997), p. 199.

marginal effect on the word's already high familiarity'.³⁴⁹ Within a poem, instead of a list, the word 'said' or 'spoke' would hardly help determine, in a blind reading, which poet had penned it. However, the use of 'lipped' or 'limned', for example, could make it recognisably Hardy's hand, Hardy being one of the few poets to use these verbs.³⁵⁰

The possibility of 'immediate recognition' or an early stage which does not require semantic processing was researched by later psychologists. In an experiment devised to study the effects of attention on recognition, Jacoby and colleagues looked at how divided attention 'can radically reduce a person's ability to recognize an item as previously presented while leaving intact the effects of that prior presentation on judgement', or how the past can influence present performance 'without the aid of conscious recollection'.³⁵¹ These experiments, exploring the 'false fame' effect, were designed to show the dissociation between familiarity and conscious recollection – both of which come under the umbrella process of 'recognition'. Subjects were given a list of famous and non-famous names to study, in a condition of either full or divided attention. When subjects later had to recognise whether they had seen certain names before and, separately, judge whether or not they were famous, the false-fame effect could only arise from feelings of familiarity, from 'an unconscious influence of the past because conscious recollection of the name as previously read in the list of nonfamous names would dictate an opposite response'.³⁵² The experiment separates 'conscious from unconscious influences of memory' and as well as proving that there are different levels of recognition, it also shows the brain's gullibility.³⁵³

Cleary and Greene continued the work of delineating different levels of recognition, by exploring 'recognition without identification'. Their title seems, to a literary scholar, a fallacy, since Aristotelian recognition is only complete once a positive identification has been made. After studying a list of words, participants were asked whether or not a word had been studied when tested with a list of word

³⁴⁹Brown, 'An Analysis of Recognition and Recall', p. 3.

³⁵⁰For 'lipped' see the introduction and footnote 3. Hardy often uses 'limn', but Frost's early work also uses this in 'The Trial by Existence', a poem with the Hardyean conceit of life as a trial: 'very beautifully God limns' (*CPPP*, p. 29).

³⁵¹Larry L. Jacoby, Vera Woloshyn and Colleen Kelley, 'Becoming Famous without being Recognized: Unconscious Influences of Memory Produced by Dividing Attention', *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 118.2 (1989): 115-25 (p. 115).

³⁵²Jacoby, Woloshyn and Kelley, 'Becoming Famous', p. 116.

³⁵³Jacoby, Woloshyn and Kelley, 'Becoming Famous', p. 124.

fragments; even if a subject could not identify the word, s/he was still asked to make a recognition judgment. Cleary and Greene found ‘above-chance recognition for words that participants could not identify from fragments’, showing again that recognition can operate independently from identification, or full understanding.³⁵⁴ This unconscious – or subconscious – quality of recognition, the feeling of familiarity that can be created without being able to trace this to a particular source, is one which both Hardy and Frost will be seen to explore.

Mandler addresses the concept of recognition as, like Allin, ‘the act of perceiving something as previously known [...] to know again’.³⁵⁵ He also erects a new perimeter for the term in question: ‘The process of arriving at a decision about prior occurrence is defined here as *recognizing*’.³⁵⁶ Importantly, this is not synonymous with identifying the target, it is more concerned with sensing the pastness or previousness of a given target. What recognition hinges on, then, for Mandler, is ‘occurrence information (or familiarity, as I prefer to call it now)’.³⁵⁷ Familiarity, the unspecifiable sensing of something known, defines the initial stage of recognition.³⁵⁸ Mandler’s famous example is of seeing your butcher on the bus – a man ‘you are sure that you have seen before’, but cannot place.³⁵⁹ ‘The initial sense of knowing the man is apparently context free’, happening as it does in an instant and long before the combing of long-term memory to place the information securely.³⁶⁰ This difference in time, as much as anything else, has been noted by Daniel Kahneman who considers ‘intuition as recognition’ when looking at the rapid decision-making of firefighters.³⁶¹

Mandler refined and redefined his ideas of recognition to become a leading exponent of the dual-process theory of recognition. In this, recognition comprises two distinct processes, commonly termed familiarity and recollection. The former

³⁵⁴ Anne M. Cleary and Robert L. Greene, ‘Recognition without Identification’, *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, 26.4 (2000): 1063-069 (p. 1067).

³⁵⁵ Mandler, ‘Recognizing’, p. 252.

³⁵⁶ Mandler, ‘Recognizing’, p. 252 (original emphasis).

³⁵⁷ Mandler, ‘Recognizing’, p. 254.

³⁵⁸ Later, Mandler admits that ‘Familiarity is not a well-grounded theoretical concept – it is the best available common-language label for describing a psychological phenomenon’ (‘Familiarity Breeds Attempts A Critical Review of Dual-Process Theories of Recognition’, *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 3.5 (2008): 390-399 (p. 391)).

³⁵⁹ Mandler, ‘Recognizing’, p. 252.

³⁶⁰ Mandler, ‘Recognizing’, p. 253.

³⁶¹ Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, p. 236. See also Kahneman pp. 11-12; pp. 236-37. In this, Kahneman is following Gary Klein’s research into naturalistic decision making and his Recognition-Primed Decision (RPD) model.

has been described, but recollection involves a ‘memory search’ and ‘depends on the semantic (meaningful) organization in which the target item is embedded and that permits retrieval’.³⁶² Recollection and recall are highly similar processes, relying on conscious memory and leading to the identification of a stimulus that would bring one to the knowledge anticipated by literary anagnorisis. The benefit of the dual-process model is that it ‘accounts for being able to say that one has previously encountered an object (on the basis of familiarity) and identifying what the object is (on the basis of recollection). Full recognition involves knowing the answer to both’.³⁶³ Importantly, for this chapter, scientists have distinguished between two separate stages within recognition and that both conscious and unconscious processing can influence it. Both Hardy and Frost will be seen to be engaging with these differing aspects of recognition, regardless of their scientific knowledge. As Mandler points out at the end of his critical review, ‘Recognition in the natural setting produces familiarity responses after months and years, and, apparently, more diverse recollection processes than those that occur in the laboratory’.³⁶⁴ Recognition within poetry throws up much more complicated patterns of processing than a laboratory experiment, but the distinctions science shows prove informative in the study of poetry.

Frost and the science of recognition memory

Recognition. An/Now/How(?) tell us something we dont [*sic*]
know. Tell us something we know but haven't been told before.
(heard before Material you didnt [*sic*] know you had before
– Robert Frost³⁶⁵

As this chapter’s epigraph shows, Frost concerned himself with how readers would relate to his poems. After outlining a prose version of the eventual poem ‘An Old Patch of Snow’, Frost judges his own efforts, as discussed above. He continues:

Now for the sentence sounds. [...] half the effectiveness of the second
sentence is in the very special tone with which you must say news of a day I

³⁶²Mandler, ‘Familiarity’, p. 391.

³⁶³Mandler, ‘Familiarity’, p. 391.

³⁶⁴Mandler, ‘Familiarity’, p. 395.

³⁶⁵Boston University, MA, Howard Gottlieb Archival Research Center, MS 1428 Robert Frost Collection, Notebook 1912, fol. 35^r.

have forgotten – if I ever read it. You must be able to say Oh yes one knows
how that goes. *LRF1* 174

Frost does not just insist upon visual or real-world anchors for recognition: recognition, for him, is also sonic. Readers should experience aural recognition from the individual sentence sounds, not simply a familiar metrical structure.³⁶⁶ The easy recognition of such sounds is akin to artistic merit for Frost, since he further notes that

To judge a poem or piece of prose you go the same way to work –
apply the one test – greatest test. You listen for the sentence sounds. If you
find some of those not bookish, caught fresh from the mouths of people,
some of them striking, all of them definite and recognizable so recognizable
that with a little trouble you can place them and even name them you know
you have found a writer. *LRF1* 176

Poetic recognition is oral rather than literary according to Frost: ‘caught fresh from [...] mouths’, it concerns hearing the stuff of everyday life.³⁶⁷ Frost’s antipathy towards ‘bookishness’ does not just concern literary versus oral culture. In a letter of 1920, Frost supposes ‘there is something practical in almost everybody, however bookish and closed to experience’ (*LRF2* 115): he specifically aligns ‘bookishness’ with ‘closed to experience’. Like the ‘waterspout’ image of a poet’s germination from Chapter 1, good writing requires the input not just of previous reading, but also ‘all the life he ever lived outside books’.

Without reference to any scientific model, Frost’s letter to Bartlett suggests the different levels of recognition: immediate recognition without concrete basis, the ability to ‘place’ these tones and, finally, to ‘name’ things. This passion for recognition continued throughout Frost’s career, claiming in a 1960 interview that ‘All thought is a feat of association: having what’s in front of you bring up something in your mind that you almost didn’t know you knew. Putting this and that

³⁶⁶For further discussion of sentence sounds see Chapter 3. For now, it will suffice that Frost is interested in accurately representing the cadences of the spoken word.

³⁶⁷This distinction between ‘bookish’ and heard language ‘from the mouths of people’ forms a significant opposition throughout Frost’s career. The England Notebook claims that ‘we see so many strange words never heard in speech when we read an English book we come to think that all book language should be a thing by itself’ (MS 6261, Notebook c.1912-1915 fols 7^r-7^v). Writing to Bartlett about North of Boston, Frost claims ‘What I would like to get is so I would never use a word or combination of words that I hadn’t heard used in running speech. I bar words and expressions I have merely seen’ (*LRF1* pp. 163-64, original emphasis).

together. That click'.³⁶⁸ Once more, this figures as a gain in knowledge – 'putting this and that together' for an epistemic outcome. If Frost does not have his own definition of recognition, then he at least includes it as a major component of his understanding of the term 'poetry'.

A letter to Bartlett from the previous year, 1913, explains what Frost 'may call the sound of sense' (*LRF1* 122). As I point out above, aural recognition can occur without establishing a metrical structure or a poem's content. This is echoed by Frost's famous formulation: 'the best place to get the abstract sound of sense is from voices behind a door that cuts off the words' (*LRF1* 122). Even without the actual words, the import of the prosodic features remains. Research since the 1980s has looked at the processing of prosody, finding that it uses the right hemisphere, unlike language processing.³⁶⁹ Recognition, as understood by Frost, could take place at the level of the auditory as separate from semantic, or fuller, recognition.

Frost's academic interests in psychology led him to William James, in text if not in person. Frost's notebooks bear out his interest in the subject, particularly his Psychological Notebook which is almost entirely a list of observations:

71 Reaction from repeated stimulation
72 Memory nothing but gains by repetition
73 Consciousness of and attention to are not
very different in meaning³⁷⁰

These are succinct statements rather than the outcome of extended experimentation, but they are evidence of Frost's engagement with different types of memory and how related cognitive processes, such as attention, affect them. In three rather cryptic entries across two further notebooks, Frost has simply written 'recognition', often by itself.³⁷¹ Enigmatically incomplete, again this proves it as a topic with which Frost's

³⁶⁸*CPPP*, p. 890. Again, his example was to do with 'tone' (in this case in his *A Masque of Reason*).

³⁶⁹See Elliott D. Ross and Marek-Marsel Mesulam, 'Dominant Language Functions of the Right Hemisphere? Prosody and Emotional Gesturing', *Neurology*, 36.3 (1979): 144-148; Sandra Weintraub, Marek-Marsel Mesulam and Laura Kramer, 'Disturbances in Prosody: A Right-Hemisphere Contribution to Language', *Neurology*, 38.12 (1981): 742-744; and Mark S. George, Priti I Parekh, Ned Rosinsky, Terence A. Ketter, Tim A. Kimbrell, Kenneth M. Heilman, Peter Herscovitch and Robert M. Post, 'Understanding Emotional Prosody Activates Right Hemisphere Regions', *Neurology*, 53.7 (1996): 665-670.

³⁷⁰MS 1178, Notebook c.1911, fol. 24^v.

³⁷¹MS 1428, Notebook 1912, fol. 8^v, fol. 35^r.

mind was employed. In one such notebook entry, Frost could be writing about the outcome of a psychological experiment:

Recognition

1st Day All books – all poems

2nd Day Two books – all poems

3rd Day Two books³⁷²

Like Ebbinghaus's famous 'forgetting curve' (although that was a recall experiment), Frost seems to be considering what can and cannot be retained by the reader, making the link between learning and memory.³⁷³ His interest is in how many poems are recognised over a series of three days. Such focus on the diminishing capacity of human memory suggests that Frost backed up his poetic intentions with a certain awareness of scientific knowledge.

Frost taught psychology briefly, even if he claims in the *Paris Review* interview 'That was entirely a joke. I could teach psychology' (CPPP 884). As an English teacher, Frost made remembering part of the curriculum: his outline for English Classes I-IV at Pinkerton Academy, 1910-11, includes directions for 'Memorizing' (its own category alongside 'reading', 'composition' and 'rhetoric'). 'Twenty poems learned from dictation' (CPPP 662) is a class requirement. Although poetry recitation would test recall rather than recognition, this shows that Frost was at liberty to observe pseudo-experiments of memory in a naturalistic setting. Beyond the curriculum, his letters and notebook entries show that Frost was concerned with the different levels of knowledge and those acts of recognition which bring them to awareness.

'Heedless' vs. hindsight: Belatedness in Hardy's verse

'I went alone, and I did not mind,
Not thinking of you as left behind.'
– 'The Walk'³⁷⁴

³⁷²MS 1178, Notebook c.1924-25, fol. 35^v.

³⁷³This is even more explicit in observation 52 of the Psychological Notebook: 'Facts must be well apart when first learned' (MS 1178, Notebook c.1911, fol. 23^v).

³⁷⁴Hardy, *CP*, p. 340.

Belatedness always carries an emotional charge and is part of the framework of tragic drama, but here I look at the concept as it is specifically used by Hardy. The employment of memory allows the realisation that things have changed, a realisation often only made with hindsight. This is what Matthew Campbell identifies in Hardy's verse as 'the paradox of an understanding which only comes with the extinction of the thing to be understood, of knowledge as loss'.³⁷⁵ Just as no memory is revisited in its original form, no physical location is the same on a revisit. In poetry, the recognition of this might be termed a 'Tintern effect', since Wordsworth's poem is the most famous example of this acknowledgment. It is a condition from which Hardy also seems to suffer, noticing as he does the gulf between what is remembered and what now is. Recognition is a thematic concern in Hardy's verse (his speakers undergo the process of recognition during the poems), yet in this section I show that if poetic recognition is a matter of content, then it is one revealed through form.³⁷⁶

'In the Small Hours' sees a speaker dreaming of playing, as he used to, his viol for dancers. Like many a Hardy poem, this includes music and dance, the 'figures of jigging fieldfolk [...] In windless whirls' (648). Hardy details their physical exertion, as a way to emphasise the vigour with which these people – who 'time and travail | Had longwhiles stilled amain' – formerly lived. This is a recognition poem because at the close of three stanzas of exuberant reminiscence, the speaker confesses

It seemed a thing for weeping
 To find, at slumber's wane
 And morning's sly increeping
 That Now, not Then, held reign. 648

Given the choice, this speaker would live in the past, but 'reign' makes it clear that only one time period can have dominion. The capitalising of 'Now' and 'Then' suggests complete distinction between two entities which the speaker struggles to

³⁷⁵*Rhythm and Will*, p. 218.

³⁷⁶On this topic, see DeSales Harrison, 'Reading Absences in Hardy's Lyrics: Representation and Recognition' in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Thomas Hardy*, ed. by Rosemarie Morgan (Farnham, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 403-23.

dissociate, as well as claiming that ‘Now’ and ‘Then’ are absolute, rather than relative.³⁷⁷

An overarching recognition at the heart of poetry dealing with memory is the recognition of the time as now, the divorcing of past from present which allows a subject to understand something as a memory rather than a current event.³⁷⁸ As a peculiarly literary form of recognition, it might be termed anagnorisis of a specialised kind: often this is a progression from wilful ignorance to knowledge. There is a subtle slippage here between recognition, as a more concrete (possibly visual) identification, and a more expansive form of recognition that encompasses realising the full significance of something. It is this latter which Hardyean speakers chase (as explored below), but both of these processes are implicated in anagnorisis and I foreground the term ‘recognition’ because Hardyean speakers are constantly having to revise their intellectual efforts. Just as Wordsworth at Tintern Abbey is forced to mark the unwanted change from past to present, so too do Hardyean speakers look on with rueful acceptance. I use ‘look on’ purposefully, since to recognise the past *as* past is to become a spectator, to adopt a new role with regard to a location or activity: you are no longer active within it.³⁷⁹

This spectating sometimes has a physical divide in Hardy’s poetry. ‘In Her Precincts’ has the speaker located outside, looking in on a space he formerly occupied:

Her house looked cold from the foggy lea,

³⁷⁷ An early seed for this idea may be found in ‘At an Inn’ from *Wessex Poems*, with its last stanza comparing ‘now’ and ‘then’ with regret (p. 69). The later ‘The Missed Train’ also ends with the consideration of ‘Then’ versus ‘Now’ (although here the punctuation determines the capitalisation; p. 787).

³⁷⁸ False recognition and memory distortion is a feature of memory loss: Alzheimer’s patients, for instance, struggle to make the distinction between memory and reality: ‘patients may believe that they turned off the stove or took their medication when they only thought about performing these activities’ (Andrew E. Budson, Alison L. Sullivan, Kirk R. Daffner and Daniel L. Schacter, ‘Semantic versus phonological false recognition in aging and Alzheimer’s disease’, *Brain and Cognition*, 51.3 (2003): 251-261 (p. 251)). Hardy’s odd poem ‘The Man Who Forgot’ is actually about a man with such strong memories of his romantic assignations that he has forgotten time has passed and it is only in the last stanza that:

My right mind woke, and I stood dumb;
Forty years’ frost and flower
Had fled since I’d used to come
To meet her in that bower.

536

³⁷⁹ Hardy corresponded with philosopher J. T. E. McTaggart (3.207, 3.329, 5.353) who expounded his views on ‘The Unreality of Time’ (1908) and ‘The Relations of Time and Eternity’ (1909) in *MIND*, which Hardy read. Hardy, then, joined in contemporary debates about the relation of past, present and future, and saw that this was not as simple as it might seem.

And the square of each window a dull black blur
 Where showed no stir:
 Yes, her gloom within at the lack of me
 Seemed matching mine at the lack of her.

The black squares grew to be squares of light
 As the eveshade swathed the house and lawn,
 And viols gave tone;
 There was glee within. And I found that night
 The gloom of severance mine alone.

473

In this poem, it is unclear whether the loss is 'her' death or the loss of a romantic attachment. However, once again the music, light and vivacity serve further to isolate the solitary speaker, 'severed' from the scene by the window-pane. Recognition for Hardyean speakers emphasises dislocation, even as it reinforces geographical claim: you were present in this space, but no longer belong to it. Hillis Miller refers to a 'present detachment' in these scenarios, that by seeing 'the past now in the perspective of what followed it [...] this double vision gives him a wisdom of disengagement'.³⁸⁰ While recognition of a multiply-used space might serve to render a sense of community, a form of social memory, here it serves only to return memory to its individualised, non-transferable form. However, the reader, too, is placed outside the window with the speaker, isolated from the community of the poem, yet communing with the speaker's soloist account.

Even when the division is not necessarily tangible, it is forceful. In 'The House of Hospitalities' the speaker revisits 'here', the opening word of the poem, where festive eating and dancing took place. However, for all of the vivid memories pictured ('Here we sang the Christmas carol [...] the viands were outset here') the actual display is motley:

[...] the worm has bored the viol
 That used to lead the tune,
 Rust eaten out the dial
 That struck night's noon.

206

³⁸⁰J. Hillis Miller, *Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 45-46.

Decay now feasts upon the scene, rather than its former merry Christmas party.³⁸¹

The repetition of ‘here’ throughout the poem suggests the incompatibility of the two versions of the same physical space. Recognition is always accompanied by disbelief for Hardy.³⁸²

The oddly titled ‘The Self-Unseeing’, from an earlier collection than ‘The House of Hospitalities’, deals with the same theme. Again, there is a repetition of ‘Here is the ancient floor [...] Here was the former door’ (166), the change in tenses marking the physical remodelling of the space despite its maintained location. Once populated, the room now sits empty:

She sat here in her chair,
Smiling into the fire;
He who played stood there,
Bowing it higher and higher. 166

Music serves to remind the speaker aurally of the place, but this sits awkwardly against the presumed contemporary silence, of which the reader is given no hint due to the insistence on remembered music. The title of the poem is confusing: promoting not seeing, while describing a visual scene. Though rare, the Oxford English Dictionary defines ‘to unsee’ as ‘to avoid seeing; to leave, or make, unseen’.³⁸³ Of course, the speaker is not seeing himself, in that the present looked upon does not deliver a sense of self to him, but of absence. However, he is also actively attempting to ‘unsee’ what is really there, in his insistence on past events. This removal from the present allows the speaker to look back with hindsight:

Childlike, I danced in a dream;
Blessings emblazoned that day;
Everything glowed with a gleam;
Yet we were looking away! 167

The first three lines of the last stanza accumulate quality to this memory, but crucially the last line punctures that valuation. It is only in looking back that the

³⁸¹See also ‘Song to an Old Burden’. Indeed, the theme of the revenant returning to find a place changed occurs across many Hardy poems, including ‘The Second Visit’ and ‘His Visitor’.

³⁸²This is in part an emotional reaction to the pain of nostalgia, though. As later sections will make clear, a misplaced confidence in false positive recognitions is more common.

³⁸³‘unsee, v’, OED.

speaker can recognise this quality; at the time of said ‘blessings’, it could not be appreciated and remained unseen.³⁸⁴

The ending of ‘The Self-Unseeing’ is an example of a form of meta-recognition: the recognition that you did not recognise something important at the time it was happening, ‘a characteristically Hardyan [*sic*] irony’.³⁸⁵ Recognition involves interacting with present stimuli and Hardy exacerbates this by actively searching for memory cues in his ‘Poems of 1912-13’. His pilgrimage to his and Emma’s old haunts is a deliberate return to a memory-saturated landscape, where the visual scenes he encounters will trigger recognition. ‘1912-13’ offers unusual recognition poems in that they chart missed opportunities from the past, compounding present lack.³⁸⁶ As an elegiac sequence, the speaker’s central self-contention is with why he did not notice that she was to die. ‘The Going’, which opens the sequence, deals precisely with this passage from life to death:

Never to bid good-bye,
Or lip me the softest call,
Or utter a wish for a word, while I
Saw morning harden upon the wall,
Unmoved, unknowing
That your great going
Had place that moment, and altered all. 338

The title tries to keep her in the process of ‘going’, yet this second stanza shows his disbelief that she has already gone. This is also borne out in his letters: writing to Edmund Gosse in December 1912, Hardy notes ‘What you say on the incredibility of this event I feel even now – it seeming sometimes for a moment that it cannot have happened, & that I shall see her coming in from the garden with a little trowel in her hand, after pottering among the plants as she used to do’.³⁸⁷ Again Hardy uses verbs prefixed by ‘un-’, the negation of confirmatory actions. ‘Unknowing’ is the crux of

³⁸⁴Suzanne Keen examines this poem in the light of affect theory (*Thomas Hardy’s Brains*, pp. 176-77).

³⁸⁵Samuel Hynes, ‘The Hardy Tradition’, p. 47.

³⁸⁶Regarding the ‘Poems of 1912-13’ I take Norman Page’s point that while ‘The present-day reader comes to these [poems] exhaustively briefed by generations of pertinacious biographical enquiry [...] Emma’s name does not appear from beginning to end of the sequence’ (‘Opening Time: Hardy’s Poetic Thresholds’, in *Thomas Hardy Reappraised*, ed. by Keith Wilson (Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 2006), pp. 262-269 (p. 267). Therefore, from this point on in dealing with the ‘Poems of 1912-13’ I refer to ‘she’ and ‘her’ within the poems, rather than ‘Emma’.

³⁸⁷4.242. The phrasing of this letter is remarkably similar to the third stanza of ‘The Going’.

his dilemma in 'The Going', since it implies that had he known, his actions would have been different.³⁸⁸ The penultimate stanza wishes that the couple had spoken of 'those days long dead', the happy early years of their relationship. Remarking on this, William H. Pritchard writes 'Hardy looks back at *not* looking back, imagines what they might have said if life were like poetry, if one knew as much during the experience as one does after it is turned into words'.³⁸⁹ Pritchard marks the division in level of knowledge between the present and the past: events have to be turned into text before they are understood. The enjambment and shorter lines of 'The Going' speed her out of any grasp (the final stanza also refers to 'such swift fleeing'), so that like the speaker, the poem can only arrest at the recognition of the 'altered all', the aftermath.

A partner poem in form and content to 'The Going', 'Best Times' is a later rendering of this same situation. 'Best Times' is a title shortened from 'Best Times Not Again', the revision asserting the inability to recognise anything but present happiness; enjoyment requires that one give up thinking of consequences:

Unlooked for I arrived on a rainy night,
And you hailed me at the door by the swaying light,
And I full forgot
That life might not
Again be touching that ecstatic height. 683

The short, often enjambed middle lines of the stanzas depict a man who feels that time to appreciate the worth of these moments has slipped past him. His fond memories lace through the longer lines, making the shorter lines a trickling away: the unstoppable, near unnoticeable, loss of his love. The title revision also crowds out the thought of these moments' non-recurrence: 'Best Times' are all-consuming in themselves.³⁹⁰ The speaker wishes he had noticed all of these last moments critically,

³⁸⁸Hardy had already used 'going/unknowing', with more positive connotations, as rhyme words in the 1870 poem 'Ditty' with a dedication to '(E.L.G.)', Emma Lavinia Gifford:

I but found her in that, going
On my errant path unknowing,
I did not out-skirt the spot
That no spot on earth excels,
— Where she dwells!

18

³⁸⁹'Hardy's Anonymous Sincerity', *Agenda: Thomas Hardy Special Issue*, ed. by Donald Davie, 10:2-3 (1972): 100-16 (p. 108, original emphasis).

³⁹⁰While this may seem a contradictory poem, in its joy in the present (rather than the past), it is only after these 'Best Times' that they can be appreciated for their 'ecstatic height'.

but to live in a continuously immediate present is impossible: no-one can think of every moment as the last; it would be psychologically disturbed to bend your thoughts to impending death. My term ‘immediate present’ recalls Bartlett’s observation that immediate recognition at the ‘moment of recognition’ can never offer full understanding.³⁹¹ Hardy here fights humanity’s perceptual possibilities. Looking back may be painful, but it should come as no surprise that ‘No thought soever | That you might never | Walk down again, struck me as I stood there’ (684). Yet once that thought has been made to lodge in Hardy’s conscience, as much as his imagination, his poetry keeps trying to fill the gap. Though she is writing about ‘A Two-Years’ Idyll’ instead, Tomalin makes the point that Hardy expresses ‘how easy it is to live through the best parts of life without realizing it, always looking forward, and how you regret it afterwards’.³⁹² As the introduction showed, Hardy valued the past over the present, in part because it offers increased comprehension of life events.

Writing about this same problem of engaging with the present, Frost’s ‘Carpe Diem’ is a reworking of Horace’s famous injunction of the same name. Frost refers to the notion of seizing the present as an ‘age-long theme’, but one which has been self-consciously ‘imposed on poems’ (*CPPP* 305). However, Frost reworks this poetic burden: his last lines make the case that Horace’s demand is difficult, near impossible:

bid life seize the present?
It lives less in the present
Than in the future always,
And less in both together
Than in the past. The present
Is too much for the senses,
Too crowding, too confusing –
Too present to imagine.

CPPP 305

The four closing ‘too’s speak of excess: the present is linguistically ungraspable here, the mere word overused in the poem, highlighting its sheer presence without wilful elaboration. As in Hardy’s ‘Best Times’, rational cognition is not possible, or at least unable to be appraised, until after the event. James Richardson points out that

³⁹¹Bartlett, *Remembering*, p. 192.

³⁹²Claire Tomalin, *Time-Torn*, pp. 164-65.

in ‘Wessex Heights’, ‘Hardy’s past becomes unbearable [...] because it has become too much like the present. It is overbearing, noisy [...] It comes with demands’.³⁹³ As in ‘Carpe Diem’, the present is viewed negatively for its demands, its inability to be sifted at will. Frost comes close to delineating the perceptual difficulty of the present, by noting it is ‘too much for the senses’.³⁹⁴

Just before quoting E. R. Clay’s famous phrase ‘the specious present’, William James declares that ‘reflection leads us to the conclusion that [the present moment] *must* exist, but that it *does* exist can never be a fact of our immediate experience’.³⁹⁵ One cannot recognise the mere occurrence of the present, let alone any form of recognition-as-comprehension about its events. As Frost would write elsewhere, ‘We can’t appraise the time in which we act’.³⁹⁶ ‘Carpe Diem’ re-evaluates time periods and (re)asserts the capacity of the past. ‘Life’, or at least happiness, lives ‘less’ in the present and the future ‘than in the past’. Like the more involved processes of recognition outlined above by psychologists, Frost praises the past as offering the most understanding and appreciation of events. Hardy’s poem ‘The Absolute Explains’ similarly comments on the present, referring to ‘Your “Now”’ as being ‘just a gleam, a glide | Across your gazing sense’ (754) as compared with the Past and Future which ‘The Absolute’ maintains intact throughout time, ‘cognate and clear’ (755). Writing about this poem, Paulin comments ‘Hardy was horrified that anyone or anything can simply disappear into oblivion and that memory, which was his way of preserving existence, is also perishable’.³⁹⁷ While Frost may joke about the unseizable present, Hardyean speakers suffer from the fact that, in consequence, epistemic triumphs can only occur after the event.³⁹⁸

One point of contention within the ‘Poems of 1912-13’ seems to be with the limits of human perception. Visual imagery abounds in this sequence: how is it that

³⁹³James Richardson, *Thomas Hardy: The Poetry of Necessity* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1977), p. 129.

³⁹⁴Pritchard compares ‘Carpe Diem’ with the way Frost’s ‘Directive’ begins ‘with a similar look toward the crowding, confusing present’: ‘Back now out of all this now too much for us, | Back in a time made simple by the loss | Of detail’ (Pritchard, *Literary Life*, p. 217; *CPPP*, p. 341).

³⁹⁵James, *Principles of Psychology*, p. 573 (original emphasis).

³⁹⁶This is from ‘The Lesson for Today’ in *A Witness Tree* (*CPPP*, p. 319).

³⁹⁷Paulin, *Poetry of Perception*, p. 202.

³⁹⁸Frost purposely oversimplifies recognition in ‘Poetry and School’ when he writes (as a fragment) ‘there is such a thing as having a moment. And that the great thing is to know a moment when you have one’ (*CPRF*, p. 166).

Hardy ‘*saw* morning harden upon the wall’ yet failed to notice ‘your great going’? A fundamental question which hangs over the poems is ‘how could I remain unaffected in the moment that something of such import occurred?’ The hierarchy of perception here galls Hardy: the more automatic aspects of the scene are so readily perceived while other (in hindsight, more important) features go unnoticed. However, Hardy fails to distinguish between the perception he achieves without trying and the effortful cognition for which he aims. Once again this highlights the degrees of recognition, with Hardyean speakers only interested in full recognition and complete encoding of a given scene (which would be cognitively unnatural). The next poem ‘Your Last Drive’ regrets not accompanying her on this journey, but more that to look upon she was ‘all undiscerned | To be in a week the face of the dead’ (339). The lack of foresight bemoaned here has several layers: he did not think to accompany her,

Yet had I sat
At your side that eve I should not have seen
That the countenance I was glancing at
Had a last-time look in the flickering sheen,
Nor read the writing upon your face,
‘I go hence soon to my resting-place’ 339

Moreover, she herself did not recognise ‘the spot | Where eight days later’ she would lie buried. There is a strong emphasis on decoding visual information, that scenes can be read as texts and understood: ‘seen’, ‘a [...] look’, ‘read the writing’. Similarly, when she fails to note her burial tree, she is described as ‘Beholding it with a heedless eye’. It is as well to point out here that Hardy asks the impossible: for the senses to foretell the future, to mark a change before its occurrence. Although ‘heed’ means to care about or pay attention to, there is an old, explicitly visual, definition of ‘to observe, see, behold, take note of’.³⁹⁹ The problem is that in this sequence, Hardy insists on comparing the ability to heed things present, with hindsight (in all its mnemonic richness). The ‘specious present’, as Clay and James called it, can only be encountered heedlessly; it is with the application of hindsight, of memory, that its significance(s) come to light.⁴⁰⁰ Hardy, though, provides such

³⁹⁹‘heed, v.’ in the OED.

⁴⁰⁰James, *Principles of Psychology*, p. 573.

detail throughout these poems ('the original air-blue gown', 'The Voice', 346) that he battles to reconcile the capabilities of visual perception with its inherent limits. In this way, his anagnorisis is less about the loss of Emma and more about recognising the limits of human knowledge, a problem of epistemology.⁴⁰¹

A few poems further in the sequence is 'A Death-Day Recalled'. This is temporally distant from 'Your Last Drive' (which describes a pre-death event, while to 'recall' places this post-death). 'A Death-Day' takes the more common topic of elegiac poetry: that nature (heartlessly) fails to react to human loss. 'Beeny did not quiver, | Juliot grew not gray' (350) even though she died. The second stanza links this back to belatedness, though, since 'Though these, unheeding, | Listless, passed the hour | Of her spirit's speeding, | She had [...] sought and loved the places' (350). 'Unheeding' is yoked by the rhyme to 'speeding' suggesting a temporal deficiency to nature, just as the speaker finds in himself (in other poems of the sequence). The distance of 'recall' though has not given the speaker perspective, it only allows him to apportion blame for this 'heedlessness'.

Psychology studies the ways hindsight can skew the accuracy of memory, noting a hindsight bias 'in which the exposure to new information regarding an event's outcome distorts one's memory for one's initial estimation of its likelihood'.⁴⁰² The 'Poems of 1912-13' reflect this, when places and occasions suddenly take on a greater value once the outcome of such activity is known to be her death. Research into the inaccuracies of hindsight has implications for public policy, given that hindsight can affect the reliability of witnesses in trials. Fischhoff writes of a '*knew-it-all-along* effect' which occurs when subjects are given the correct answers to general knowledge questions.⁴⁰³ In this application of hindsight, though, there is a value to claiming knowledge, in order to look intelligent within a peer group. For Hardy, the reverse is true: he cannot believe he did not know it all

⁴⁰¹For DeSales Harrison, 'Your Last Drive' 'posits a sort of invisible script, present but unreadable; because she was to die so soon after the narrated incident, surely something somewhere indicated this fact, even though the poet knows that he would have been powerless to see it. He is posing for himself a version of the tree-falling-in-the-forest conundrum. If signs exist, but are invisible, are they properly signs at all? And what are the ramifications of this question for a speaker who is in fact a writer? The problem matters for Hardy precisely because the world in the wake of Emma's death now brims with signs neither wholly intelligible nor unintelligible, neither wholly legible nor illegible, neither wholly present nor absent' (pp. 415-16).

⁴⁰²Asher Koriat, Morris Goldsmith and Ainat Pansky, 'Toward a Psychology of Memory Accuracy', *Annual Review of Psychology*, 51 (2000): 481-537 (p. 495).

⁴⁰³Baruch Fischhoff, 'Perceived Informativeness of Facts', *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance*, 3.2 (1977): 349-58 (p. 349, original emphasis).

along. Since Fischhoff's experiment saw subjects (mis)remember their actual answers in light of the correct answers, as well as subjects hypothesising the answers they would have given (in light of the correct answers), he concludes that 'people do overestimate both how much they knew (memory) and would have known (hypothetical)', an effect so robust that it 'was both replicated and left unaffected by exhorting subjects to work harder or telling them to beware of bias in their responses'.⁴⁰⁴

The title of Fischhoff's paper – 'Perceived Informativeness of Facts' – is interesting alongside Hardy's poetry given that Hardy tries too hard to perceive information and ultimately looks for something which can only be granted by hindsight. In an earlier paper, Fischhoff comments on how 'upon receipt of outcome knowledge judges immediately assimilate it with what they already know about the event in question [...] the retrospective judge attempts to make sense, or a coherent whole, out of all that he knows about the event'.⁴⁰⁵ This brings one back to Bartlett's famous dictum that all remembering is an 'effort after meaning'.⁴⁰⁶ Conscious or not, this stresses the 'effort' on the part of the brain to make sense of the world. Memory is all about connection and association, and psychology has always been fascinated by how far the human brain will reach to make meaning. Indeed, Fischhoff writes of the hindsight bias, 'I believe that people are capable of conjuring up a feeling of having known something about the most disparate facts'.⁴⁰⁷

Following on from Fischhoff, Hawkins and Hastie define the hindsight bias as 'a projection of new knowledge into the past accompanied by a *denial that the outcome information has influenced judgment*'.⁴⁰⁸ It is as if it always was so, and one should have known it as such. Though not terming it thus, Hawkins and Hastie highlight the importance of anagnorisis to literature, noting that 'dramatic literature is replete with plots that appeal to people because of the sense of hindsight they invoke in the characters and the audience. The tragedies of Oedipus, King Lear, and Willie Loman would all be diminished if they, and the audience, did not believe that

⁴⁰⁴Fischhoff, 'Perceived', p. 352; p. 356.

⁴⁰⁵Baruch Fischhoff, 'Hindsight is Not Equal to Foresight: The Effect of Outcome Knowledge on Judgment Under Uncertainty', *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance*, 1.3 (1975): 288-99 (p. 297).

⁴⁰⁶Bartlett, *Remembering*, p. 20.

⁴⁰⁷Fischhoff, 'Perceived', p. 356.

⁴⁰⁸Scott A. Hawkins and Reid Hastie, 'Hindsight: Biased Judgments of Past Events After the Outcomes are Known', *Psychological Bulletin*, 107.3 (1990): 311-27 (311, original emphasis).

they should have known it all along'.⁴⁰⁹ The literary tradition taps into this rich vein of anxiety humans have about the past and how a lack of knowledge causes certain events.

This epistemological break is particularly poignant at moments of death.⁴¹⁰ Hardy seems less upset about the missed opportunity to say goodbye, than about not realising these actions as the last. 'The Last Time' attests to this, where, in another kiss of presumably many, 'I read no finis in it, | As at closing of a book' (687). Once more, Hardy makes this a textual problem: the inability to read the message. The speaker 'read it all too rightly', but only upon looking at the dead body.⁴¹¹ The minor poem 'Known Had I' deals with the behavioural change that Hardyean speakers seek in hindsight: 'Known had I what I knew not' opens the first stanza, with the second (and final) stanza answering 'I would have trod beside you [...] would not have left you lonely' (806). Nowhere is the epistemic disjoin more clearly stated than in the conclusion of this poem: the speaker would have acted differently 'if I could only | Have known what I know now'.⁴¹² Knowledge gained is accompanied by regret in Hardyean anagnorisis.

The recognition, the realisation does come in these poems, but always too late. It is the passage of time which affords this understanding, but Hardy's verse asks the question 'Why can it not happen in the moment?' Thom Gunn determines that 'Hardy's mastering obsession, in his prose as well as in his poetry, was a regret for the past', but to specify this further, Hardy is a poet obsessed by belatedness.⁴¹³ I might term this epistemic belatedness, since it concerns arriving at knowledge after the fact. Although arguably this is true of all knowledge, Hardy's verse senses the tragedy of this condition.⁴¹⁴ The OED's second definition of 'belated' is relevant

⁴⁰⁹Hawkins and Hastie, 'Hindsight', p. 323.

⁴¹⁰For a moral philosopher's perspective on recognition following bereavement see Blustein, *Moral Demands*, pp. 250-51.

⁴¹¹While 'The Last Time' is not necessarily biographical, 'Ten Years Since' from Hardy's next collection, *Human Shows*, is dated 'Nov. 1922', ten years on from Emma's death, replicates the simile: the speaker berates himself for how 'with casual look | And ear, light note I took | Of what shut like a book | Those ten years since!' (p. 722, emphasis mine).

⁴¹²The less effective 'If You Had Known' conjectures that the addressee's behaviour would have been similarly changed by knowledge (p. 632-33).

⁴¹³Thom Gunn, 'Hardy and the Ballads', *Agenda: Thomas Hardy Special Issue*, ed. by Donald Davie. 10:2-3 (1972): 19-46 (p. 33).

⁴¹⁴It is possible that in this Hardy was influenced by his reading of Italian Romantic poet, Giacomo Leopardi, who philosophised about man's relationship with happiness and temporality. According to Millgate's reconstructed library, Hardy owned *Essays, Dialogues, and Thoughts of Count Giacomo Leopardi, Translated, with an Introduction and Notes, by Major-General Patrick Maxwell* (London: Walter Scott, Ltd (intro 1893)). This particular edition includes the 'Dialogue between Tasso and his

here: ‘detained beyond the usual time, coming or staying too late; out of date, behind date’.⁴¹⁵ Hardyean speakers never only arrive late, they themselves feel out of date, because they insist on communing with time past. That ‘The Last Time’ comes from Hardy’s *Late Lyrics* (1923) and ‘Known Had I’ from *Human Shows* (1925), shows that the issue of recognition remains unresolved throughout his career.

There is always a temporal dimension to the mnemonics of recognition: it requires acknowledging the co-existence of past and present, a dual time frame. However, in aligning these two comparatively, there is an inevitable loss felt at the difference. As John Wain points out, ‘all experience is a twice-told tale: there is the event as it actually happened and as it affected us at the time, and the event as we recall it in the light of later knowledge and later development within ourselves’.⁴¹⁶ Wain establishes the modulating effect of the application of memory on an experience, but sees it as natural rather than negative. However, the ‘later knowledge and later development’ which recognition brings is, for Hardy, painful; this ‘twice-told tale’ has one too many dimensions for it to be easily assimilated. Wain continues, ‘When we muse on our experience and re-create it in memory, we become very like ghosts haunting the scenes of former action’.⁴¹⁷ If not Hardy himself, then his speakers certainly roam the grounds of former action. The dead may haunt the living’s memories, but – in their acts of remembrance – the living themselves begin to emulate ghosts before their time.⁴¹⁸

In his seminal work *Recognitions*, Terence Cave argues for the scandalous nature of anagnorisis, that it ‘may retrospectively “explain” earlier enigmatic events, but considered in itself [...] it retains an aura of oddity, unease, disruption’.⁴¹⁹ Cave primarily examines recognition scenes in drama, but his attempt to rethink the straightforward Aristotelian progression from ignorance to knowledge pertains to

familiar spirit’, in which the spirit tells Tasso that any human ‘dwells in a mere expectation of happiness to come, or a mere belief that he has at some former time been happy; two things both of them false and illusory’ (p. 100). Eventually, the spirit concludes ‘it is plain that happiness is ever either past or future – never present’ (p. 100).

⁴¹⁵‘belated, *adj.*’, OED.

⁴¹⁶John Wain, Introduction to *The New Wessex Selection of Thomas Hardy’s Poetry*, eds. by John Wain and Eirian Wain (London: Macmillan, 1978), pp. 10-18 (p. 14).

⁴¹⁷Wain, Introduction, p. 14.

⁴¹⁸Hardy also once wrote that that ‘if there is any way of getting a melancholy satisfaction out of life it lies in dying, so to speak, before one is out of the flesh; by which I mean putting on the manners of ghosts, wandering in their haunts, and taking their views of surrounding things. [...] Hence even when I enter into a room to pay a simple morning call I have unconsciously the habit of regarding the scene as if I were a spectre’ (qtd. in Armstrong, *Haunted*, pp. 209-10).

⁴¹⁹Terence Cave, *Recognitions: A Study in Poetics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 270.

Hardy. Rather than resolution, the reader is led to see recognition as an inherently problematic cognitive asset. Instead of reconciliation, divisions are demarcated: Cave calls anagnorisis ‘the perception of an ineradicable – but also seductive – asymmetry between the recognizer and the recognized’.⁴²⁰ Knowledge may be gained, but it does not necessarily provide comfort. Hardy’s depictions of belatedness are founded on anxieties temporal and moral: in coming too late, recognition may offer explanation but no opportunity to make amends. As Wain suggests, attempting to align past and present synchronically leads to comparison and, usually, disappointment. For Hardy, poetry offers the admission that the time is out of joint, the cursed spite being that while he may attempt to set it right, he cannot.⁴²¹

Frost’s ‘something’s: Indeterminate recognitions

‘Heaven gives its glimpses only to those
Not in a position to look too close’
– ‘A Passing Glimpse’⁴²²

As seen above, Frost had more than a passing scientific interest in recognition. If Hardy found the experience of recognition hard to reconcile with daily life, then Frost sought burgeoning scientific explanations for it. In the opening remarks to his Harvard Advocate Reading, Frost speaks of a recent book on the vagaries of visual perception, of

how hard it is to see anything: to see it steadily and to see it whole [...] nothing however steadily you gaze at it will stay the same, it comes and goes. Now you see it, now you don’t. Look at a dot and it comes and goes, if you look steadily.⁴²³

Akin to a magic trick, the experience of seeing is rendered as an accident of misdirection which even concentration cannot overcome, the chiasmus of Frost’s

⁴²⁰Cave, *Recognitions*, p. 270.

⁴²¹In this assessment, I am aware that I am disagreeing with Irving Howe’s more positive stance that ‘the deepest note struck in these poems is not regret but the recapture of experience [...] the experience rendered is a kind of second life achieved through imagination’ (*Thomas Hardy* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), p. 182).

⁴²²*CPPP*, p. 227.

⁴²³Robert Frost, Harvard Advocate Reading, 13 March 1962 (recording held at Woodberry Poetry Room, Harvard University, MA).

own phrasing returning to the starting point. If ‘nothing [...] stay[s] the same’, then the world is radically contingent and any account of experience needs to acknowledge this. Encouraged by his reading, Frost puts the emphasis not on what *is* but on what ‘seem[s] to you’, since this is the perception which will engender every subsequent cognitive process.

While this appearance was in 1962, such considerations had long been on Frost’s mind. In his Psychological Notebook, observation 83 concerns the ‘Largest group of dots by direct perception. Intuitive addition Largest group of groups Intuitive multiplication Does nearness of spots help? Does one out of symmetry hinder? Does the mind try to make groups where none are obvious’.⁴²⁴ Taking ‘dots’ as an example suggests empirical experimentation, a variable able to be isolated and controlled. Yet Frost’s poetry deals not with dots, but complex and varied topics. These observations are useful in proving Frost’s awareness of contemporary research; how this informs his poetic practice is harder to trace, but nonetheless fruitful.

A clearer relation to the poetry can be seen perhaps in no. 96: ‘I know my sense is mocked in everything’.⁴²⁵ The rise of psychological knowledge undermined, for the first time, the long-praised human ability to discriminate her/his surroundings. Work in visual perception in particular exposed the gulf between perception and material reality. Frost’s admission of experience as psychologically subjective is evident not just in his poetry, but his notebooks. Frost’s England Notebook has an entry dealing with this dynamic interaction between perceiver and environment:

Reality is a relationship
Old knowledges know the
new fact.
Monism of active idea
“Know backwards: live forwards”
Tendency; pointing[?]⁴²⁶

⁴²⁴MS 1178, Notebook c.1911, fol. 25^v.

⁴²⁵MS 1178, Notebook c.1911, fol. 26^v. While it is unattributed here, this is a quotation from the poem ‘Man’ by Sir John Davies, which Frost quoted during a 1962 reading (see *Robert Frost Speaking on Campus*, p. 162).

⁴²⁶MS 6261, Notebook 1912-1915, fol. 5^v (original emphasis).

What is noticeable here is not only the recognition that ‘reality is a relationship’ rather than a stable concept, but that this relationship is between ‘old’ and ‘new’. Frost does not specify this in terms of recognition, but it offers a strange echo of psychology’s conclusion that ‘knowing’ something requires that the past moment be brought to bear. ‘Monism’ seems to contradict this idea; however, the ‘active idea’ requires two components. As Robert Faggen points out, Frost is here quoting Kierkegaard’s *Works of Love* (1847): ‘Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards’.⁴²⁷ This dictum is at the heart of Hardy’s struggles with memory: recognitions come too late, only in time for you to realise you have already lost something. Frost’s contraction of Kierkegaard’s sentiment, though, neatly demonstrates the oppositional quality of recognition. As Bartlett expounds, the ‘moment of recognition’ is a fraction of the time periods involved: in order to recognise something fully, one searches backward for the information to send her/himself forwards, and past this moment.

The contestable, indefinable qualities inherent within recognition seem to me to be of interest to Frost. Often, his poems fail to specify quite what they are ‘recognising’ within the world: ‘Something there is that doesn’t love a wall’ (‘Mending Wall’, *CPPP* 39); ‘Something I saw or thought I saw’ (‘On the Heart’s Beginning to Cloud the Mind’, *CPPP* 264); ‘For Once, Then, Something’ (*CPPP* 208) – the reader cannot know what the ‘something’ is, but s/he cannot deny its presence. Frost’s refusal to close the gap between ignorance and knowledge emulates, even literalises, the dynamic interaction of known and unknown found within recognition. It is almost that it does not matter what is recognised, as long as one undergoes the process of recognising.

‘Something’ is a peculiar gem of the Frostian vocabulary, and semantically slippery.⁴²⁸ While for Hardy when ‘Something Tapped’ it transpires to be a ‘pallid moth’ (464), Frost mischievously augments the possibilities of this indeterminate word, where in ‘Mending Wall’ ‘I could say “Elves” to him, | But it’s not elves exactly’ (*CPPP* 40). Where Hardyean recognitions hinge on loss, usually that of death, Frost is keen to have readers recognise the lack of explanation for phenomena

⁴²⁷*The Notebooks of Robert Frost*, ed. by Robert Faggen (Cambridge, MA; London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 709.

⁴²⁸Faggen also notes that ‘Something and thing are words which resonate throughout Frost [...] and should not be taken entirely as a joke’ (*Challenge*, p. 24, original emphasis).

– and what might be substituted instead: he wrote on a scrap of paper that ‘Performance in poetry and in life is recognition and admission of the fact that things are not to be too well understood’.⁴²⁹ ‘Recognition’ of this Frostian strand is slightly altered into something semi-jovial, submitting to the unknowable nature of much of the world while highlighting human inquisitiveness to recognise, and understand, all things encountered.⁴³⁰

The notion of substitution, or more precisely the recognition of substitution, is present in some of Frost’s most famous poems. ‘Birches’ foregrounds its artistic veneer, establishing that while ‘I *like* to think some boy’s been swinging’ the birch trees into their bent shape, ‘swinging doesn’t bend them down to stay | As ice-storms do’ (*CPPP* 117, emphasis mine). A third of the way into this metaphorical offering, the speaker notes,

But I was going to say when Truth broke in
With all her matter-of-fact about the ice-storm
I should prefer to have some boy bend them *CPPP* 118

The speaker berates ‘Truth’ and the ‘matter-of-fact’ for waylaying the route to metaphor and imagination.⁴³¹ What is important is the bare-faced recognition that the speaker’s notion is fanciful and self-directed: it goes against ‘Truth’, offering instead a poetic overlay to a pedestrian occurrence.⁴³² Reality, experienced via the mind of the onlooker, is not synonymous with ‘Truth’, the objective nature of the world. Similarly, ‘On the Heart’s Beginning to Cloud the Mind’ diverts from reality because ‘I knew a tale of a better kind’ and fashions instead an anthropocentric vision of ‘the shiny desert with spots of gloom | That might be people and are but cedar’ (*CPPP* 265). Armed with the knowledge of reality’s provisionality, Frost

⁴²⁹Robert Frost, ‘Prose, Fragments’ MS 1178 Box 19 Folder 101.

⁴³⁰Roger Pack has written of Frost’s ‘enigmatical reserve’, though more in relation to religious belief, in *Belief and Uncertainty in the Poetry of Robert Frost* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 2004), pp. 136-49.

⁴³¹Indeed, an earlier version of ‘Birches’ (its first printing, in the *Atlantic Monthly*) had an extra line with a meta-literary comment:

‘But I was going to say when truth broke in
With all her matter-of-fact about the ice-storm,
(Now I am free to be poetical?)
I should prefer to have some boy bend them’

This is from *The Atlantic Monthly*, 116.2 (August 1915), in ‘First Appearances’, MS 1178, Box 32 Folder 10, p. 222.

⁴³²‘Maple’ is another Frost poem which relies on ‘Truth as interpretation, as discovery, as experience, as metaphor’ (Barry, ‘Frost as a Literary Critic’, p. 30).

teases out the experiential qualities of recognition and the yarns spun in place of knowledge.

This same disjoin between what is known to be true and what is felt to be true is the conceit of ‘The Need of Being Versed in Country Things’. Here, the speaker looks upon the wreck of a burned-out house and knows that for the birds ‘there was really nothing sad’ yet he himself ‘has to be versed in country things | Not to believe the phoebes wept’ (*CPPP* 223). By using the third person singular, Frost makes the last construction proverbial: supplanting randomness with narrative is a common trait.⁴³³ The conclusions the speaker draws in this poem are not audacious: s/he imagines how the barn was formerly used ‘for teams that came by the stony road | To drum on the floor with scurrying hoofs’ (*CPPP* 223). It is this recognition of a barn’s function, of certain familiar qualities and their absence, which leads to pathos: the speaker’s emotional reaction is irrational with regard to ‘Truth’, but apt experientially. The irony of the poem is that this artistic rendering, the poetic recognition, is actually ‘needed’ as much as is being versed in truth. Frost may intend ‘versed’ to mean ‘educated’, but it is precisely Frost’s acts of versifying that lead readers to want meaning and pathos in this abandoned house.⁴³⁴ For the reader to be properly ‘versed’ s/he must constantly be weighing up the arguments of poetry and previously encountered art, against her/his experiences of nature and reality. To be ‘versed’ is to recognise that you are, to a certain degree, cognitively conditioned by your expectations of poetry, certain traits have been incorporated into your cultural memory.

This recognition of the artistic veneer inherent in perception and played upon by poets may explain Frost’s insistence on placing ‘something’ unspecified before the reader. He exploits those very frustrations of recognition readers encounter within real-life phenomena. ‘For Once, Then, Something’ sees the speaker looking into a well, trying to see beyond his reflection. It dramatises the process of visual perception, of trying to make sense of what is seen:

I discerned, as I thought, beyond the picture,

⁴³³On Frost’s use of proverbs, see Timothy D. O’Brien’s *Names, Proverbs, Riddles, and Material Text in Robert Frost* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) who sees that ‘many of [Frost’s] pieces contain – and some of his shorter poems in fact amount to – proverblike expressions’ (p. 52).

⁴³⁴A building which shows similarities with those of ‘Ghost House’ and ‘Directive’, two poems which also use memory to fashion a story out of the former dwelling.

Through the picture, a something white, uncertain,
 Something more of the depths – and then I lost it.
 [...] a ripple
 Shook whatever it was lay there at bottom,
 Blurred it, blotted it out. What was that whiteness?
 Truth? A pebble of quartz? For once, then, something.
 CPPP 208

The speaker undergoes the mystery of trying to see meaning within the world, ‘beyond’ and ‘through’ what is obvious at the surface. To discern is – by etymology and definition – to perceive and to recognise, the very processes under discussion. Yet after this precise verb of discrimination, the speaker begins hedging: ‘as I thought’, ‘uncertain’ and the double use of ‘something’. The poem ends with no resolution as to what constitutes the ‘something’ of the experience.⁴³⁵ As ever, Frost mixes profundity with wit: in guessing the nature of the ‘whiteness’ he moves from the possibility of all-encompassing ‘Truth’, to the precious but bathetic ‘pebble of quartz’.

Frost revised his title from ‘Wrong to the Light’, widening the significance of this attempted revelation beyond the visual, but even the title is interrupted by the parenthetical tempering which characterises the poem. ‘For Once’ was Thompson’s prime example for the second ‘kind of recognition [...] correlation’ which he identifies in Frost’s work, in which ‘The present moment serves as a fulminating agent which fires experience lost in the dark of memory’.⁴³⁶ While Thompson’s assessment is somewhat overblown, the interaction between the momentary and the remembered is present in the poem, in the form as much as the content. ‘Calculated to tease the metrists’, the hendecasyllabic ‘For Once’ also teases the reader, since its punctuated phrasing belies its underlying metre.⁴³⁷ Much as the speaker ‘thinks he discerns’, the pattern which attempts revelation is continually part-hidden by Frost’s self-questionings. Like ‘The Voice’, this has many literary precedents, and ‘has

⁴³⁵D’Avanzo puts ‘For Once, Then, Something’ into the context of wells as they figure in Thoreau’s writings, given that ‘The purpose in Thoreau’s habitual investigations of well bottoms is to gain a visionary insight’ (*A Cloud of Other Poets*, p. 89-90).

⁴³⁶Thompson, *Fire and Ice*, p. 23.

⁴³⁷Frost himself proclaims this ‘calculation’ in *LRF2*, p. 50. Tim Kendall details the ways in which the poem has ‘confused many of Frost’s commentators, who have variously described the meter as accentual or syllabic. (*The Art of Robert Frost*, p. 324). Kendall also notes that ‘For Once’ has been mistaken for a sonnet (*The Art of Robert Frost*, p. 326). Kendall details the Classical precedents for hendecasyllabic poetry, but two important English examples would be Tennyson’s ‘Hendecasyllabics’ and Swinburne’s ‘Hendecasyllabics’.

claims to be the most classical of Frost's works' and Brower notes that 'Water came to rebuke the too clear water' is 'the English equivalent of the line used by Catullus in a poem that Frost is fond of reciting'.⁴³⁸ Frost's game of recognition in this instance comprises form as well as content.

While the 'something' may be '[shaken]', 'blurred', 'blotted', the metre never quite 'blots it out'. The metre, like the 'picture', tantalises: it is heard clearly ('I discerned, as I thought, beyond the picture'), 'and then [...] lost'. For all of its separating punctuation, the last line is near perfectly metrical. However, this does not necessarily clarify its meaning. Is the ending trochee of 'something' intended to foreground the speaker's sigh at a near-miss, or to honour that 'some', a quantity of, revelation has taken place, even if incomplete? 'Something' transforms beyond its first appearance as a modifying adjective ('something white'), to 'Something more of the depths', where it could be read as either a noun or an adjective. When the poem finally lands on 'something' securely as a noun in its own right, it may be grammatically certain, but semantically more unknown than ever. Frost ensures that the reader's attention is focused on 'something': the least definite word of the poem.

A related notebook entry asks 'Why will we be looking for the bottom of things that haven't got a bottom?', again suggesting a compulsion to epistemic pursuits.⁴³⁹ Rather than deliver the reader safely to knowledge (anagnorisis's intended destination), Frost, 'uncertain as to the precise nature of this sudden meeting between past experience and present experience [...] ventures into the recording of the moment, the capturing of the incident', offering more a phenomenology of recognition in these poems than unearthing a steadfast cognitive procedure.⁴⁴⁰ As the next section of this chapter argues, both Hardy and Frost use poetry to imbue the environment with meaning and to enrich it mnemonically.

⁴³⁸Kendall, *The Art of Robert Frost*, p. 325. Brower, *Constellations of Intention*, p. 138, the Catullus line being 'qui dono lepidum novum libellum' ('To whom do I dedicate this new charming little book', the opening to Catullus's collection of poem (translation from Dr. Semele Assinder, with the author's thanks)).

⁴³⁹MS 62561, Notebook 1912-1915, fol. 47^r. Frost also refers to the human tendency to question the world in his poetry: 'The Tuft of Flowers' refers to thinking 'of questions that have no reply' (*CPPP*, p. 31) and 'Too Anxious for Rivers' informs the reader that 'The truth is the river flows into the canyon | Of Ceasing to Question What Doesn't Concern Us' (*CPPP*, p. 342).

⁴⁴⁰Thompson, *Fire and Ice*, p. 24. Amelia Klein has also written that 'Truth, for Frost, requires the recognition of limitation, of the contingency of knowledge' ('The Counterlove of Robert Frost', *Twentieth-Century Literature*, 54.3 (2008): 1-26 (p. 22)).

Underpinning Frost's poetry is the recognition that humans create their own significances within a world which, though it may hint at secrets to be revealed, cannot communicate with them directly. If the ultimate message is unable to be reconstructed, then what matters is the impression created: this is what can be taken into memory. The theme of not being able to know is present in several Frost poems, but, unlike Hardy, Frost writes of it as benign denial, almost amusing. 'A Passing Glimpse', about seeing 'flowers from a passing car | That are gone before I can tell what they are' (CPPP 227), again details the difficulties of perception when the speaker, enticed by visual features, is unable to process the scene for instantaneous understanding. Being allowed a 'glimpse' at all appears contingent on the inability to appreciate it fully. 'Glimpse' is from *West-Running Brook* (1928), and in Frost's next collection, *A Further Range* (1936), he extends 'Glimpse' to celebrate not knowing in 'Lost in Heaven':

Seeing myself well lost once more, I sighed,
 'Where, where in Heaven am I? But don't tell me!
 Oh, opening clouds, by opening on me wide.
 Let's let my heavenly lostness overwhelm me.'

CPPP 269

In this final stanza, the speaker not only agrees to be lost, but actively requests it; this speaker joys in being overwhelmed. Unlike a Hardyean speaker, who experiences this as traumatic, the Frostian one can engage with the unknown world, even participating in its activity – 'Let's' making speaker and nature partners.

The refusal to specify exactly what is being recognised, or what is able to be recognised at all, leaves the reader with more questions than answers and, arguably, this is a spur to memory: since the experience cannot easily be categorised, it remains open-ended (an idea furthered in Chapter 3). Writing about aural experiences, Seán Street notes 'if we are imaginatively captured by a sound before we understand it, we remember it; that experience of wonder before understanding is in itself the beginning of true understanding'.⁴⁴¹ Placing the reader alongside the speaker in her/his attempts to discover 'something', Frost teases her/him with the process rather than the end-product of recognition. As psychology progresses, this may link with the so-called 'revelation effect' within recognition memory.

⁴⁴¹Street, *The Memory of Sound*, p. 10.

Researchers Watkins and Peynircioglu found that ‘when test items are obscured and require discovery’ they are better recognised, and thus better remembered.⁴⁴² This series of experiments dealt with detailed typographical transpositions (revealing one letter at a time; presenting individual letters of a word rotated) rather than complex literary allusions, but what is interesting is that ‘gradually unfolding the test words did indeed appear to induce a greater feeling of recognition’.⁴⁴³ Necessitating greater engagement with the text on the part of the reader enhances its familiarity, something which – albeit in a non-scientific way – Frost encourages by aligning his reader and speaker.⁴⁴⁴

While this experiment attempted to quantify revelation, ‘revelation’ might also be a better term for certain types of literary recognition. Though more often associated with the modernists (since ‘writers in the Modernist mode continually circle back to the origins of literature, in myth, for a revelation of those archetypal forms which provide pattern and meaning’),⁴⁴⁵ Daleski claims that ‘Hardy’s art of intensification is suggestively close to James Joyce’s modernist art of epiphany’, when examining Hardy’s impressionist techniques.⁴⁴⁶ Revelation, then, is another aspect of poetic recognition for both poets.

Frost has two poems with ‘revelation’ in the title, both asserting the impossibility of complete knowledge. ‘Revelation’ notes the ‘pity’ of having to ‘speak the literal to inspire | The understanding of a friend’ (*CPPP* 28), since an inner emotional state will not be spontaneously revealed to another. For all that ‘All Revelation’’s last line claims ‘all revelation has been ours’ (*CPPP* 303), the early stanzas question ‘where [...] what [...] whither’ without clearing up any of the poem’s many ambiguities. Mark Richardson comments on Frost’s tendency

⁴⁴²Michael J. Watkins and Zehra F. Peynircioglu, ‘The Revelation Effect: When Disguising Test Items Induces Recognition’, *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, 16.6 (1990): 1012-1020 (p. 1012).

⁴⁴³Watkins and Peynircioglu, ‘The Revelation Effect’, p. 1014.

⁴⁴⁴This greater engagement also owes something to the depth of processing model, that this step-by-step process would encourage a cumulative understanding.

⁴⁴⁵Evans Lansing Smith, *Ricorso and Revelation: An Archetypal Poetics of Modernism* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1995), p. 3.

⁴⁴⁶Hillel Matthew Daleski, *Thomas Hardy and the Paradoxes of Love* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1997), p. 8. Brian Green also has a chapter on ‘Revelation’ in Hardy’s poetry (*Pearls of Pity*, pp. 63-86), though he is more interested in revelation as a transcendent experience somewhat in lieu of religious belief. Green sees Hardy’s revelations as more fruitful and positive than I do – he describes the mood of Hardyean revelation as ‘metaphysical knowledge which is truly consolatory’ (*Pearls of Pity*, p. 72). I look at Hardyean revelation as something tempted and attempted, but which is never quite given (nor should it be).

to reduce or qualify the agency of a poet, whose actions in part become catalytic and responsive. [...] Consider this passage from “The Figure a Poem Makes” (1939): “I tell how they may be a better wildness of logic and of inconsequence. The logic is backward, in retrospect, after the act. It must be more felt than seen ahead like prophecy. It must be a revelation, or a series of revelations, as much for the poet as for the reader. For it to be that there must have been the greatest freedom of the material to move about in it and to establish relations in it regardless of time and space” (*CPPP* 777). There is an impersonal quality in the very movement of the sentences, a carefully modulated vagueness that seems quite faithful to the implication that Frost might know as little about the outcome here as we do.⁴⁴⁷

Poetry enacts revelations within its form. Noticeably, this passage from ‘The Figure’ comes just after Frost states ‘the initial delight [of a poem] is in the surprise of remembering something I didn’t know I knew [...] There is a glad recognition of the long lost and the rest follows’ (*CPPP* 777), near-reiterating the letter to Bartlett with which this chapter opened. Frostian ‘somethings’ announce the possibility of a revelation which is, as yet, obscure. Writing about ‘Mowing’, where a scythe whispers ‘Something, perhaps, about the lack of sound’, (*CPPP* 26), Pritchard notes that ‘one is momentarily tempted to hear the secret revealed in the next-to-last line’ – ‘The fact is the sweetest dream that labour knows’. However, ‘the period at the end of that line doesn’t permit us to make it the object of the scythe’s whispering [...] all the scythe “whispers” is the regular repetition of its own sound’.⁴⁴⁸ Frost’s poems draw attention to revelation, then syntactically foreclose the possibility.

Ideas of revelation also appeal to Frost’s notions of good poetry. In ‘The Prerequisites’ he warns of ‘the wrong kind of help’ in reading poetry (by which he means such things as prefaces or footnotes), since ‘the heart sinks when robbed of the chance to see for itself what a poem is all about’ (*CPRF* 174). A poem should allow the reader enough ownership of the material to perceive and remember it individually.⁴⁴⁹ Watkins and Peynircioglu acknowledge that their study fails ‘to

⁴⁴⁷Richardson, *Ordeal*, p. 196.

⁴⁴⁸Pritchard, *Literary Life*, p. 28.

⁴⁴⁹This, though, is not without its caveats: there is an optimal amount of effort required to understand a poem, too difficult renders it ineffective. Hardy feared obfuscation, seeing it as an unfortunate interest of modern poets: ‘a fashion for obscurity rages among young poets, so that much good verse is lost by the simple inability of readers to rack their brains to solve conundrums. They should remember Spencer’s remark that the brain powers spent in ascertaining a meaning is so much lost to its appreciation when ascertained’ (5.275). See also letter to Ezra Pound, March 18, 1921 (6.77).

provide any evidence that the effect extends to [recognition] decisions beyond that of membership in a just-presented list', but importantly note that 'because the revelation effect is not [...] predicted by any theory, it points up a limitation in our understanding of recognition memory'.⁴⁵⁰ The revelation effect offers another dimension as to why Frost's indeterminate, or frustrated, recognitions are mnemonically effective: they necessitate complex cognitive processing yet never offer an answer, forcing readers to engage in the process of revealing, while never achieving complete revelation.

While Hardy did not use 'something' in the same way, he – like Frost – believed that not everything should be given to the reader. Among the maxims Hardy copied out from Balthasar Gracian are 'leave people in uncertainty about your purposes' and 'Keep always something behind in store'.⁴⁵¹ In a later notebook, Hardy further copied the advice 'There is but one art – to omit!'.⁴⁵² This is a characteristic to which he adhered, with Hynes claiming that Hardy's poetry depends on 'reticence as a mode of expression'.⁴⁵³ Reticence regarding memory stimulation, I argue, spurs the reader to seek (by imagination) the missing information, and Hardy and Frost meet in their ability to hold back speech, even as Chapter 3 exemplifies their promotion of voice.

At the heart of 'At Castle Boterel' sits the unknown. Having offered impressive amounts of detail, the speaker suddenly reserves the right to privacy, noting 'What we did as we climbed, and what we talked of | Matters not much, nor to what it led' (351). The reader is placed firmly outside of the lovers' conversation, not privy to its secrets and this is how it remains 'Something that life will not be balked of'.⁴⁵⁴ By refusing to disclose the details, but admitting that it constituted 'A time of such quality', Hardy keeps this unknown alive in the reader's memory.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵⁰Watkins and Peynircioglu, 'The Revelation Effect', p. 1019; p. 1020.

⁴⁵¹*LNTH1*, p. 94; p. 97 (as printed in the *Fortnightly Review*, 21 (1877)).

⁴⁵²*LNTH2*, p. 136 (from *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. Sidney Colvin (London, 1899).

⁴⁵³Samuel Hynes, *The Pattern of Hardy's Poetry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), p. 11.

⁴⁵⁴Although not my concern here, Frost's 'Meeting and Passing' shares many similarities with 'At Castle Boterel', not least in the lines 'We met. But all | We did that day was mingle great and small | Footprints in summer dust' (*CPPP*, p. 115).

⁴⁵⁵The lesser poem 'By the Runic Stone' also highlights how two lovers 'chattered [...] Rapt there alone | In the transport of talking there' without revealing anything of their conversation (p. 471). Although somewhat twee, Hardy's 'The Seasons of Her Year' works by holding off from telling the reader 'what I dreamt of secretly [and] | His lips have said' (p. 156).

Frost uses the same technique at the end of ‘The Star-Splitter’: hoping to see ‘our place among the infinities’ through a telescope, neighbours ‘looked and looked’ but, like ‘For Once’, did not ‘know any better where we are’.⁴⁵⁶ Knowledge of the cosmos is not to be gained, but the heart-warming moment of the poem is when the neighbours set up the telescope:

We spread our two legs as we spread its three,
Pointed our thoughts the way we pointed it,
And standing at our leisure till the day broke,
Said some of the best things we ever said. *CPPP* 168

In a poem which otherwise includes speech, Frost refrains from allowing the reader to hear these ‘best things’, making her/him imagine them instead and remember the frame of the experience without the details. Pritchard praises Frost for ‘not saying too much, too explicitly’ and links this with ‘making it [...] memorable to the reader’.⁴⁵⁷ In ‘The Wind and the Rain’ (a title which recalls Hardy’s ‘During Wind and Rain’), Frost’s speaker contemplates death, including Hopkins-like sentiments (‘should a child be left unwarned | That any song in which he mourned | Would be as if he prophesied?’).⁴⁵⁸ Later on, in the only line typographically separated from the rest of the poem, Frost admits ‘And there is always more than should be said’, a lone sentence whose addition (‘and’) ironically announces the necessity of retreat.⁴⁵⁹ ‘Should’ implies that a certain restraint ought to be exercised in revealing through language. Hardy and Frost both knew when to leave things unsaid, the unsaid being more likely to linger, with its unanswered questions and untold possibilities, in the memory. Purposefully, Hardy’s and Frost’s poems are ‘partial revelations’, revealing only ‘some[thing]’.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁶*CPPP*, pp. 166-68. A theme across much of Frost’s poetry is that man tries to know too much of Nature, and to dominate Nature through this knowledge. ‘On a Tree Fall Across the Road’ is a somewhat tongue-in-cheek response to this idea, that the tree falls ‘to ask us who we think we are | Insisting always on our own way so’ (*CPPP*, p. 220). Elsewhere, Frost begs joyfully ‘May something always go unharvested!’ in ‘Unharvested’ (*CPPP* 277).

⁴⁵⁷Pritchard, *Literary Life*, p. 234. While Pritchard is writing specifically about ‘I Could Give All to Time’ (from *A Witness Tree*), the point holds.

⁴⁵⁸*CPPP*, p. 306. The comparison I am making is with Gerald Manley Hopkins’s ‘Spring and Fall’.

⁴⁵⁹*CPPP*, p. 307. Frost’s ‘One More Brevity’ also deals with revelation and the unsaid: the poem ends with the vision of a star, ‘An intimation, a shot of ray, | A meaning I was supposed to seek, | And finding, wasn’t disposed to speak’ (*CPPP*, p. 434).

⁴⁶⁰‘Partial revelations’ is a phrase taken from Elizabeth Jennings’s assessment of Frost’s poetry, noting that ‘For Frost, life is a mystery; poetry may penetrate a little way into that mystery but even it will never discover the whole truth’ (*Frost*, p. 17). There remains the possibility that Hardy’s and

Distorting re-cognition: Ver[s]ifying false associations

‘I doubt if any thing is more related to another thing
than it is to any third thing except as we make it’
– Robert Frost⁴⁶¹

The revelation effect has more recently been discovered to distort memory, that ‘under certain conditions, people can be made to believe that they have seen items previously even when they have not’.⁴⁶² Other researchers have found the revelation effect not just to be a matter of familiarity, but that it can be induced by leading subjects to ‘adopt a more liberal decision criterion’ when deciding whether or not a test item is new.⁴⁶³ This is called ‘criterion-shift’, referring to ‘changing one’s bias, meaning that people become more or less lenient in their judgements’.⁴⁶⁴ Although criterion-shift is more often related to signal detection theory, it shows how recognition can lead to falsehood, and that there are several ways in which the brain can be biased into affirming a positive recognition.⁴⁶⁵ Other researchers still have shown that the revelation effect can be used to plant false autobiographical memories in subjects, that ‘unscrambling a key word in an event description led subjects to claim more confidently that the event had occurred in their childhood’.⁴⁶⁶ Memory’s fallibility has been examined and extended by researchers to see just what can be ‘recognised’ without necessarily being known.

Frost’s reticence in giving the whole of a memory is partly influenced by Browning, whose ‘Memorabilia’ ends, disingenuously, with ‘Well, I forget the rest’ (*Robert Browning: Poetical Works 1833-1864*, ed. Ian Jack (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 672).

⁴⁶¹MS 1178, Notebook c. 1913-1917, fol. 10’.

⁴⁶²Nicole L. M. Pernat and Daniel M. Bernstein, ‘Revelation Effect’, *Encyclopedia of the Sciences of Learning*, Norbert M. Seel (New York: Springer, 2012), pp. 2863-2865 (p. 2863).

⁴⁶³William E. Hockley and Marty W. Niewiadomski, ‘Interrupting recognition memory: Tests of a criterion-change account of the revelation effect’, *Memory & Cognition*, 29.8 (2001):1176-1184 (p. 1183).

⁴⁶⁴Pernat, ‘Revelation’, p. 2864. Pernat and Bernstein are particularly interested in extending the revelation effect to include non-episodic memory, as well as that the revelation need not be related to the target word/answer (such as solving a maths problem before answering a lexical question, and vice versa, will produce more confident recognition judgements).

⁴⁶⁵Signal detection theory refers to the type of experiment in which participants identify whether a stimulus is present or absent, and there are only four possible outcomes (hit, miss, correct rejection or false alarm). The point I am making is that this is a rigid formula, unlike the complex stimulus which is a poem.

⁴⁶⁶Daniel M. Bernstein, Bruce W. A. Whittlesea and Elizabeth F. Loftus, ‘Increasing confidence in remote autobiographical memory and general knowledge: Extensions of the revelation effect’, *Memory & Cognition*, 30.3 (2002): 432-438 (p. 435).

In this section, I am interested in how poetic performances of recognition might be used to change, or otherwise reformulate, a memory. This grows out of observing a peculiar trait which both Hardy and Frost share: creating false connections between disparate things. Hardy recasts familiar events in superstitious terms by linking human life to counterpart object(s). ‘The Six Boards’ charts a parallel development of the speaker along with the six boards (and thus, the tree) which will form her/his coffin. In place of an inadvertent acquaintance in death, Hardy posits a symbiotic dyad between woman and tree.⁴⁶⁷ Their closeness is expressed in the first line, ‘Six boards belong to me’ (820): the speaker owns to the relationship as a given. The poem meditates on the intimate future pairing of these two who know nothing of each other’s existence (and never will, since the speaker recognises that as a non-sentient being in death, ‘I shall not know’ the boards in the future):⁴⁶⁸

Those boards and I – how much
In common we, of feel and touch
Shall share thence on, – earth’s far core-quakings,
Hill-shocks, tide-shakings – 821

Hardy forces the pronoun ‘we’, even though he is writing about the pairing of two inanimate things. However, viewed as the poet and speaker want it to be seen, this is a close connection, tactile, with each member of the partnership receiving identical haptic feedback, as if they share a nervous system. ‘The Six Boards’ is oddly convincing, because it has enough of what Frost terms ‘recognition points’: coffins are made of a wood of unknown origin; they are brought speedily to the owner; coffin and owner lie together. Even in the stanza above, Hardy has recognisable meteorological phenomena with which the reader can agree – earthquakes, tremors and waves – and the hyphenates further bind the pair. By subtly avoiding the word ‘death’, and all its cognates, Hardy vivifies the relationship between the speaker and the six boards, tricking the reader and insisting on the two things being remembered together.

⁴⁶⁷This is also the conceit of Hardy’s ‘The Felled Elm and She’, where the elm’s increasing rings parallels the woman advancing in years. They expire together, with the poem closing on the observation that they were ‘both unaware | That your lives formed such a pair’ (p. 869).

⁴⁶⁸Cf. the second stanza of Hardy’s ‘Your Last Drive’ which, while not positing so close a relation as this does, observes the ‘spot [...] where you were to lie [...] under its tree’ (p. 339) of which the woman is ignorant.

‘The Workbox’ is another ballad which considers the fate of coffin-wood. In it, a husband fashions a sewing-box for his wife, but proceeds to reveal that the wood used is ‘scantling that I got | Off poor John Wayward’s coffin’ (398). The knowledge of the wood’s origin sends man and wife into contrasting contemplations. The husband is fascinated by the coincidence of the wood’s new resting-place:

‘The shingled pattern that seems to cease
Against your box’s rim
Continues right on in the piece
That’s underground with him.

‘And while I worked it made me think
Of timber’s varied doom;
One inch where people eat and drink,
The next inch in a tomb.’ 398

The ‘varied doom’ of both people and objects, is something which Hardy exploits throughout his verse.⁴⁶⁹ Of course, Hardy creates further variety by implying that objects have a ‘doom’ at all. Even the level-headed husband wants there to be a link between the pieces of wood: significantly, he says that the pattern only ‘*seems* to cease’, allowing that it ‘continues’ underground. He urges a sustained connection between the two pieces, thus tying his gift to a dead man. Although his wife claims to be unshaken by superstition, the poem proposes otherwise:

‘Ah, no. I should have understood!
It shocked you that I gave
To you one end of a piece of wood
Whose other is in a grave?’

‘Don’t, dear, despise my intellect,
Mere accidental things
Of that sort never have effect
On my imaginings.’ 398

The first line of the last stanza shows that the lady protests too much – the poem as a whole is a dramatisation of how ‘accidental things’ affect one’s ‘imaginings’. It is no accident that on multiple occasions Hardy draws disparate things into close relation

⁴⁶⁹Such as in ‘Old Furniture’, ‘The Satin Shoes’, ‘A Gentleman’s Second-Hand Suit’ and ‘Haunting Fingers’.

and asks that this new arrangement be recognised; it is apt, then, that the dead man's surname is 'wayward'. In connecting the unconnected, Hardy creates a more memorable world, gathering things together and widening the networks that the brain uses to associate them.

The above examples are of the universal experience of death. However, Hardy uses this same idea of affecting a dual narrative between two things in his account of the *Titanic* disaster. In 'The Convergence of the Twain', 'the Immanent Will [...] Prepared a sinister mate' (307) for the *Titanic*, so that the construction of ship and iceberg happens in parallel, equally planned. The direct relationship between these two distinct objects is emphasised, since they are 'twin halves of one august event'. Further linking these two and suggesting their inextricability, is that the collision occurs when 'the Spinner of the Years | Said "Now!"'. Predetermination is inherent in the idea of a 'Spinner', given the work of Clotho, the Fate who spins the thread of human life. Hardy himself seems to urge the poem towards this fatalism, since he revised the noun to 'Spinner' from the less specific 'Mover' in an earlier draft.⁴⁷⁰

While historians may argue over the exact division of responsibility for the *Titanic*'s sinking, none will argue Hardy's superstitious stance. He asks for a specific version of events to be recognised, for certain relationships to be forged in the mind of the reader.⁴⁷¹ It is a direct instance of the poet shaping memory. The force of this is further recognised when one considers that 'Convergence' was originally printed in the Souvenir Programme of the 'Dramatic and Operatic Matinée in Aid of the 'Titanic' Disaster Fund' at Covent Garden, 14 May 1912.⁴⁷² Readers of the original document were being encouraged to redefine the way they thought of the disaster – to see it as a predestined tragedy of mythological proportions. Inevitably, knowledge of this poem effects how the historical event (the sinking of the *Titanic*) is encoded. This is why I consider one characteristic model of Hardy/Frostian recognition is re-cognition, or the revised cognition of a given situation.

⁴⁷⁰This is indicated by James Gibson's notes (*CP*, p. 307).

⁴⁷¹Though not my concern here, Hardy also often writes about (romantic) meetings and relationships as pre-determined. 'The Destined Pair' mentions 'Fate' and insists that 'Two beings were drifting | Each one to the other [...] the tracks of their feet | Were arcs that would meet' (p. 908). 'Before Knowledge' asserts that "'We move [...] On closing lines which [...] Will intersect and join some day!'" (p. 445).

⁴⁷²'Dramatic and Operatic Matinée in Aid of the "Titanic" Disaster Fund', Programme, Royal Opera, Covent Garden, 14 May 1912 (held at Dorset County Museum).

Frost is similarly aware of the poet's lasting power in relating different things. His mischievousness in this regard might be identified in the notebook entry which asserts 'I can show connection' and then draws an arrow to the next entry.⁴⁷³ In a letter of 1928, he admits 'My ambition has been to have it said of me He made a few connections' (*LRF2* 645). Frost realises that relations are created rather than revealed; the poet can make them. He is aware of his shaping hand guiding not only his pen, but also his reader. Frost's gesture towards the relationship between man and nature is the poem 'Tree at my Window', but it is more hopeful and less superstitious than Hardyean offerings. Here, the speaker consciously manipulates the form to create a relationship between himself and the unresponsive tree:

Tree at my window, window tree,
[...]
let there never the curtain drawn
Between you and me. *CPPP* 230

The initial chiasmus purposefully engineers the arch-rhyme which binds 'me' and 'tree'. The speaker claims a reciprocal relationship where 'I have seen you' and 'you have seen me', but the onus is on the speaker to create this. Frost owns to the artistic attachment of man and tree by opening the final stanza with 'that day she put our heads together, | Fate had her *imagination* about her' (*CPPP* 231, emphasis mine). Frost's speaker, unlike Hardy's, displays a degree of self-awareness about the artificiality of this connection.

Frost, though, is not immune to the feeling of the uncanny which coincidence can engender. The much-discussed (and much-revised) sonnet 'Design' contends with the coincidence of three distinct white objects in a tableau. Spider, flower, moth: their meeting is unlikely, with the poem emphasising that these are 'assorted characters [...] Mixed' (*CPPP* 275). Frost uses the turn of the sonnet to ask 'What [...]?' three times, expressing the inexplicability of the situation. The sestet exists purely to doubt how this 'witches' broth' came to be, encouraging ideas of intention with the verbs 'brought' and 'steered'. Whatever may or may not have fated this meeting of three, Frost's sonnet worries about the nature of 'design', since the conclusion the poem comes to is that 'if design govern in a thing so small', it can

⁴⁷³MS 1178, Notebook c. 1913-1917, fol. 10^r.

only be a ‘design of darkness to appall’.⁴⁷⁴ Not a believer in religious determinism, Frost nevertheless presents an environment which asks to have meaning read into it. However, the two options he is left with are that either no such ‘design’ exists, or that – worse – a malevolent deity sports with man’s perception. James Murphy also points out that in the original version of this sonnet, Frost ended on ‘Design! Design! Do I use the word aright?’ and, in doing so, ‘gave voice to an anxiety raised by the advent of modern science, exacerbated by Darwin, and still troubling contemporary culture’.⁴⁷⁵ For Murphy, the repetition of the word worries about ‘the relation between the two most commonly used senses of the noun “design”’, these being ‘mental plan or intention and physical plan or formal order’.⁴⁷⁶ This is the crux of Frostian recognition: whether what the poet sees within the world is actually there to be recognised, or whether it is a recognition enabled by art.

Murphy describes ‘Design’ as ‘a poem about interpretation [... about] whether the question of meaning is appropriate at all’ and this is a concern which figures more widely in Frost’s work.⁴⁷⁷ As per his indeterminate recognitions, Frost’s poems are not designed to be easily understood and explained away. Recognition is a mental asset, but it has its uncanny elements and can be all too easily manipulated.⁴⁷⁸ Both Hardy and Frost explore the possibilities of re-cognition as recognition in an interrupted or revised form, deviating from the more common view of the topic. Casting back to the hindsight bias, Hawkins and Hastie also ‘speculate that the hindsight bias is a major ingredient in extrasensory belief, in people’s willingness to believe in extrasensory perception, and in the belief that certain striking coincidental events are predetermined [...] deterministic thinking of a special sort that postulates mysterious mental powers or the machinations of a fateful power is invoked to produce unconventional causal explanations’.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁴In a talk on Frost, Scottish poet Don Paterson claimed that ‘Design’ shows that Frost’s ‘nihilism is realism terrifyingly well-qualified’ (‘Frost as a Thinker’, Aldeburgh Poetry Festival, 7 November 2010). See also Faggen’s reading of ‘Design’ (*Challenge*, pp. 86-88).

⁴⁷⁵James Murphy, “‘A thing so small’: The Nature of Meter in Robert Frost’s “Design””, *Modernism/modernity*, 14.2 (2007): 309-328 (p. 311).

⁴⁷⁶Murphy, “‘A thing so small””, p. 311; p.312.

⁴⁷⁷Murphy, “‘A thing so small””, p. 309.

⁴⁷⁸I am aware that in using the term ‘uncanny’ I awaken Freudian and psychoanalytic ideas of recognition, but this is not the model I am concerned with here. Freud’s 1919 essay ‘The Uncanny’, does, though, emphasise ‘recognising’ as an action, and Freud also engaged with Aristotelian ideas of anagnorisis (see Part I ‘Recognizing Psychoanalysis: The Institutional Uses of Greek Tragedy’, of Sarah Winter’s *Freud and the Institution of Psychoanalytic Knowledge* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999)).

⁴⁷⁹Hawkins and Hastie, ‘Hindsight’, p. 320.

Although not exploited to its aesthetic potential as here, such biases are a noted feature within psychology and help explain these perhaps unexpected pairings.

Recognising the limits of memory

‘Recognition is the mnemonic act par excellence’
– Ricoeur⁴⁸⁰

I am concerned with recognition as an extremely fallible, yet tempting, cognitive process. Even if a place or event is remembered well, returning to it does not betoken a repeat experience. If anything, one recognises how much things have changed. This ‘Tintern effect’ is a Wordsworthian legacy: Wordsworth’s shorter poem, ‘Nutting’, enunciates this very problem in the tell-tale phrase ‘unless I now | Confound my present feelings with the past’.⁴⁸¹ However, Wordsworth is concerned with feelings rather than the cognitive process of recognition. As Thompson points out, Frost’s poetic inspiration ‘is in no way related to what Wordsworth had in mind when he referred to “emotion recollected in tranquillity.” [...] the poet’s fresh recognition creates an emotional crisis’.⁴⁸² Hardy and Frost, while not neglecting the emotional component of recognition, tend instead to track, or to question, the psychological processes of perception, then to immediate recognition, and finally to understanding. That said, there is no way of extracting the present from the past, and the speaker has to recognise that her/his memory is more of a reconstruction – something created, something made.

Paul Ricoeur holds recognition in high esteem and sees recognition in more of an Aristotelian linear fashion. For him, the dual process described by psychology happens in one fell swoop:

We come closer to what I like to call the small miracle of recognition if we discern in it the solution of the oldest enigma of the problematic of memory – that is, the present representation of something absent. Recognition is the effective resolution of this enigma of the presence of an absence, thanks to the certitude that accompanies it: “It’s the one – yes, it is!”⁴⁸³

⁴⁸⁰Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 430 (original emphasis).

⁴⁸¹Wordsworth and Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 242.

⁴⁸²Thompson, *Fire and Ice*, p. 24.

⁴⁸³Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, trans. by David Pellauer (Cambridge, MA; London, England: Harvard University Press, 2005), pp. 124-25.

Ricoeur banks on there being certainty in recognition, but more often than not each recognition is on a spectrum of certainty veering more or less towards doubt. He is right to emphasise that recognition in the present moment requires a strong input from the past, but as this chapter shows, recognition is rarely an ‘effective resolution’ and more often a problematic process, posing more questions than giving answers.

Hardy and Frost may insist on reading the environment and recognising meaning in phenomena which does not exist beyond their artistic creation, but writing such poems is an optimistic gesture against a world which is otherwise devoid of meaning. Frost’s ‘On Going Unnoticed’ demonstrates this:

As vain to raise a voice as a sigh
In the tumult of free leaves on high.
What are you in the shadow of trees
Engaged up there with the light and breeze?

Less than the coral-root you know
That is content with the daylight low,
And has no leaves at all of its own;
Whose spotted flowers hang meanly down.

You grasp the bark by a rugged pleat,
And look up small from the forest’s feet.
The only leaf it drops goes wide,
Your name not written on either side.

You linger your little hour and are gone,
And still the woods sweep leafily on,
Not even missing the coral-root flower
You took as a trophy of the hour.

CPPP 226

The opening line of the last stanza euphemises life along Shakespearean lines, making the chapter of one man’s life an insignificance in the grand scheme of things.⁴⁸⁴ Such efforts for remembrance, for lasting meaning, are ‘vain’, yet Frost continued to pen poetry much like Horace – the Roman poet loved by both Hardy and Frost – who knew that in writing poetry, ‘My reputation shall keep green and

⁴⁸⁴This line is reminiscent of those lines following ‘Out out, brief candle’ from *Macbeth* which inspired Frost’s own poem ‘Out, out–’.

growing'.⁴⁸⁵ 'On Going Unnoticed' is a strange poem, not least because Frost was destined to go impressively noticed, but also because the pronoun 'you' shifts. At the start of the poem the 'you in the shadow of the trees | Engaged up there with the light and breeze' could be another of Frost's somethings, a possible deity or external influence on the world. However, by latter stanzas, the 'you' is clearly an individual destined to be forgotten. Symbolically, as the figure 'look[s] up small from the forest's feet', the only leaf dropped 'goes wide': not associating with the figure, failing to deliver any message.

This amnesia of the landscape also figures textually, since 'your name [is] not written on either side' of this leaf. 'Going Unnoticed' is the failure to leave 'your' signature on the world. Even as the figure tries to leave a mark (by taking a flower with him) the forest is careless, 'not [...] missing' it. The last line is ambiguous in the meaning of the verb 'took': it offers both 'you took the flower as a material symbol of your events there' and also 'you (wrongly) thought that this flower was the significant component of this scene'. Every effort to establish a process of recognition and to forge connection is dashed in this poem: the forest will not recognise the import of this visitor, nor will any trace be left by which this individual could be recognised. In contrast with this effacing of 'points of recognition', the majority of Hardy's and Frost's poems suggest that recognition – for all its faults – has a redemptive quality for the poets.

What I have shown is that recognition is not, as Aristotle wanted, a linear – and positive – progression from ignorance to knowledge. Neither memory nor recognition necessarily leads to a better or more nuanced understanding. What recognition offers is a cognitive best-fit, which is part-based on volition and can thus be directed. Hardy's poetry depicts the suffering which can attend on the piecemeal nature of recognition, as well as the conflicting time-frames of event and recognition. Frost, cognisant of recognition's many hazards, purposely ushers his poetry towards the attempt to recognise without reaching any epistemic end-point.

As the last section of the chapter shows, recognition as depicted by Hardy and Frost is burdened with the urge, even the need, to understand and as such brings with it regret or anxiety. While memory is usually about bringing things forward – as one remembers, the past has present presence – by manipulating recognition, Hardy

⁴⁸⁵*The Odes of Horace*, trans. by James Michie (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 207.

and Frost can plant memory backwards, so that that which never was comes to be remembered: the Titanic was always destined for its collision, those white objects gathered purposefully. To reformulate Aristotle, then: one moves from ignorance to some sort of knowledge, yes, but that epistemic location might be pre-decided and the reader ushered towards it.

CHAPTER 3 –

Hearing Sounds Past: The Importance of Being Voiced

‘All poetry is a reproduction of the tones of actual speech’

– Robert Frost⁴⁸⁶

In discussing the language of poetry, Aristotle makes the link between recognition and voice. ‘What is needed’ he claims, ‘is a blend, so to speak [...] since the unfamiliar element (the foreign word, the metaphor, the ornamental word [...]) will save the diction from being commonplace and drab, while the colloquial element will ensure its clarity’.⁴⁸⁷ This returns to a problem of expectation: being familiar enough, yet providing novelty. Aristotle introduces ‘the colloquial’ as part and parcel of poetry’s language. The use of such diction is important for both Hardy and Frost, as they marshal local voices into verse. Voice itself, though, is a reminder of transience: sounds die on the air as they are uttered and leave no remains beyond a rapidly diminishing phonological trace. Yet insist on voice Hardy and Frost continue to do, writing the heard, or the to-be-heard. This chapter questions why both Hardy and Frost should remain so close to a phenomenon which they know to be temporally tenuous.

In 1914, following the rather modest success of his first collection, *A Boy’s Will*, American Robert Frost would excite the English literary scene with *North of Boston*. The reviews picked up on its characteristics in their titles: ‘A New Voice’; ‘Robert Frost, A Poet of Speech’.⁴⁸⁸ Even if a reviewer did not highlight this vocal aspect of Frost’s verse in the title, it came out in the article. For Harold Munro, ‘Mr Frost appears to have studied the subtle cadences of colloquial speech with some

⁴⁸⁶From ‘Some Definitions’, in *CPRF*, p. 84.

⁴⁸⁷*Aristotle’s Poetics*, trans. by James Hutton (New York; London: W. W. Norton, 1982), p. 69.

⁴⁸⁸Lascelles Abercrombie, ‘A New Voice’, review of Robert Frost, *North of Boston* (1914), in *Robert Frost: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Linda W. Wagner. (New York: Burt Franklin, 1977), pp. 11-14 (first publ. in *The Nation*, 15 (13 June 1914), 423-24); George H. Browne, ‘Robert Frost, A Poet of Speech’, review of Robert Frost, *North of Boston* (1914), in *Robert Frost: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Linda W. Wagner (New York: Burt Franklin, 1977), pp. 36-38 (original publ. *The Independent*, 22 May 1916: 283-284). William Stanley Braithwaite would also preface a 1915 interview with Frost with the claim that ‘His work won over, by its sheer poetic achievement, critics and poets, who had not realized before the possibilities of reproducing the exact tone of meaning in human speech in literary form’ (qtd. in *Robert Frost on Writing*, p. 151).

peculiar and unusual apprehension'.⁴⁸⁹ Lascelles Abercrombie's 'A New Voice' would go on to note that 'it is extremely hard to indicate by a verse-movement such an elusive thing as the intonation of speech' and that while this 'intention itself is not a new thing in poetry [...] such complete reliance on it as the chief element of technique' was Frost's characteristic, and risk.⁴⁹⁰ As Abercrombie puts it, 'Frost uses almost entirely dialogue or soliloquy; he must have somebody talking'.⁴⁹¹ The same year as *North of Boston*'s release saw the publication of Hardy's *Satires of Circumstance*, containing the vocally-focused 'The Voice' and 'The Haunter' along with a multitude of poems containing direct speech. As Hardy's poetry has gained critical interest, the exactness of his ear has become a point of admiration: Raymond Chapman has a chapter entitled 'The Language of Hearing', identifying precisely the skills with which I am concerned.⁴⁹²

In a notebook held at Boston University, Frost has written on the front cover 'Teach all the satisfactions of successful speech'.⁴⁹³ This aligns with one of Frost's two general aims for the Pinkerton Academy English Curriculum, that it will teach students 'the *satisfaction* of superior speech' (*CPPP* 662, original emphasis). Learning to be a discerning listener is part of being a reader for Frost. The emphasis on 'satisfaction' suggests the pleasurable nature of the written voice, and the ability of voice to modulate emotion is a thread running throughout this chapter. The epigraph above shows that for Frost poetry is a second-making of something recognisable and experienced (*CPRF* 84). It relates to his fourth definition of a poem as beginning with 'a home-sickness'; it is the ability of poetry to accord with something already within the reader which is powerful. Hearing not just the poem,

⁴⁸⁹Harold Munro, 'New Books', review of Robert Frost, *North of Boston* (2014) in *Robert Frost: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Linda W. Wagner (New York: Burt Franklin, 1977), p. 15. This voice, though, was distinctively American. As Seán Street points out '1912 to 1915 did not turn him [Frost] into an English poet of the Georgian era. Edward Garnett said of Frost as he was in 1915 that his was "a genuine New England voice, whatever be its literary debt to old-world English ancestry"' (*Dymock*, p. 60).

⁴⁹⁰Lascelles Abercrombie, 'A New Voice', review of Robert Frost, *North of Boston* (1914), in *Robert Frost: The Critical Reception*. ed. by Linda W. Wagner. (New York: Burt Franklin, 1977), pp. 11-14 (p. 14).

⁴⁹¹Abercrombie, 'A New Voice', p. 14.

⁴⁹²In his *The Language of Thomas Hardy* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990). As a point of comparison, Reuben A. Brower's famous *The Poetry of Robert Frost: Constellations of Intention* takes 'Voice Ways' as the title for its first chapter. Adam Piette also comments on Hardy's ability to produce 'what might be termed sonic pathetic fallacy', though Piette is primarily interested in Hardy's prose (see *Remembering and the Sound of Words: Mallarmé, Proust, Joyce, Beckett*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 25-28).

⁴⁹³Robert Frost, MS 1428, Notebook 1912, front cover (original emphasis).

but beyond the poem to remembered experience, is taken as a fundamental quality of verse. The fact that these are ‘definitions’ prove that questions of speech return one to the nature of poetry itself. In his *England Notebook*, which (as shall be seen) was crucial for Frost’s experimentation with ideas of voice, sentences, tones and text, he surmises ‘Poetry we are agreed is some sound’.⁴⁹⁴ Auden’s concise definition of poetry as ‘memorable speech’ also informs this chapter.⁴⁹⁵ While this tacitly assumes poetry is ‘speech’, ‘memorable’ modifies the noun, suggesting that certain conditions are necessary for speech to be thus distinguished. This chapter charts Hardy’s and Frost’s ability to create ‘memorable speech’ by remaining cognisant of what Matthew Campbell has observed: poetry ‘is conscious of itself as both text and voiced sound’.⁴⁹⁶ Campbell’s definition applies to all poetry, but I show that Hardy and Frost are particularly ‘conscious’ of this quality, and exploit it to best effect.

In Frost’s ‘The Most of It’, speaker cries out for a ‘voice in answer’ (*CPPP* 307), but the noise heard, ‘instead of proving human’ is ‘a great buck’ splashing through the water ‘and that was all’. What is given is merely an echo and then the vision of a startled buck, when the figure had sought ‘not its own love back in copy speech, | But counter-love, original response’. This poem helpfully highlights two qualities of voice: firstly, it is ‘original’, personal and unique; secondly – and in part due to the first – it has an emotional quality. A vocal response in this poem would constitute ‘love’. This weighty importance of sound can be understood if the ability to make noise is thought of not as communicating complex messages, but as an assertion of presence, if not existence itself.⁴⁹⁷ The presence and immediacy (since voice supposes a contemporaneous speaker) that voice affords will be considered as a spur to memory here. As something so ephemeral, voice – unlike previous elements considered – might be less a mnemonic or way of remembering, than a spur to, and a promotion of, memory instead.⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹⁴MS 6261, *Notebook 1912-1915*, fol. 39^v.

⁴⁹⁵W. H. Auden, *Prose 1926-1938*, ed. by Edward Mendelson (London: Faber, 1996), p. 106.

⁴⁹⁶Campbell, *Rhythm and Will*, p. 36.

⁴⁹⁷On the emotional power of auditory memories (and their role in aiding the memory loss which comes with dementia or Alzheimer’s) see Street’s *The Memory of Sound* (2014).

⁴⁹⁸As I am focusing on voice (rather than sound more generally) this work has links with, though differs from, the emerging field of Sound Studies. 2012 saw the publication of both *The Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies* and *The Sound Studies Reader*, suggesting the growing academic interest in this area. I make use of previous commentators on auditory culture to position my work in relation to this sphere of enquiry, but with my emphasis on memory and the human voice, this chapter is a more specialised pursuit.

This chapter begins with scientific research into auditory memory in order to understand both the pull of voice, as well as the difficulty auditory material has in lodging in the memory system. The focus then turns to Hardy's and Frost's particular interest in the verbal and how to represent speech in written text, as the preservation of voice appears to be a privileged form of remembrance. The next section explores Frost's distinctive (and enigmatic) 'sound of sense' from a new angle: I look at the largely ignored fact that Frost pits the 'eye reader' against the 'ear reader', revealing his emphasis upon hearing poetry. The importance of ballad traditions is the subsequent focus, analysing how both poets adopt and adapt this oral legacy, before examining the importance of the dramatic, in both transmitting memories and offering a memorable form. This chapter analyses not only the use of these ephemeral phenomena in poetry, but also Hardy's and Frost's emphasis on the local and colloquial in speech, since, as Barry Truax points out, 'listening is the crucial interface between an individual and an environment'.⁴⁹⁹ Their work suggests that both men found these ideas strongly linked, dwelling as they were in rural areas where the distinctive aspects of local speech were fading due to urbanisation and the standardisation of education. In taxing readers' cognitive processes with phenomena which, naturally, should go unnoticed, Hardy and Frost create literary value for the preservation of voice, where the loss of individual voices becomes expressive of a greater cultural loss as those sounds previously heard on the air can now only exist on the page.

The science of hearing: Distinguishing between sounds

'I hear ... and I forget.
I see ... and I remember.'
– Old Chinese proverb⁵⁰⁰

The ability of humans to remember sounds is a much-debated topic within psychology. Baddeley's model of working memory has a separate section dedicated to auditory material: the phonological loop.⁵⁰¹ His model, though, relates to short-

⁴⁹⁹Barry Truax, *Acoustic Communication* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1994) p. 13.

⁵⁰⁰James Bigelow and Amy Poremba give this proverb as cultural context in their scientific research paper ('Achilles' Ear? Inferior Human Short-Term and Recognition Memory in the Auditory Modality', *PLoS ONE*, 9.2 (2014): e89914, <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0089914>> [accessed 20 May 2014], p. 7.

⁵⁰¹Baddeley, *Human Memory*, pp. 52-69.

term memory and it is as well to point out that ‘auditory sensory memory can be split up into at least three types, *echoic memory*, extending over a matter of milliseconds, *auditory short-term memory* extending up to perhaps 5 or 10 seconds, and *auditory long-term memory*’.⁵⁰² While auditory might outperform visual within short-term memory, when it comes to longer-term memory, phonological coding gives way to a deeper, semantic coding.

It should be pointed out that there is a strong distinction between auditory material (from noise to formalised music) and verbal material: human ears are peculiarly attuned to speech. Baddeley notes the ‘strong tendency to supplement other aspects of memory by verbalizing’, as well as the practicality of this mode, since ‘it is much easier to select and control verbal material than it is to manipulate visual, tactile or auditory stimuli’.⁵⁰³ In their famous experiment, testing which background auditory stimuli effected the ability to learn and remember unrelated information, Salame and Baddeley found that the distracting effects of speech transcended language barriers:

Recall is disrupted just as much whether the irrelevant material is in English or Arabic, suggesting that the recall process is operating at the level of sound rather than meaning. The effect is not simply one of distraction, however, since meaningless noise does not disrupt memory, even when presented very loudly. We interpreted the irrelevant speech effect by assuming that the irrelevant spoken material gains access to the short-term speech-based store, even when the subject tries to ignore it; it then disrupts performance by corrupting the memory trace. We assumed that noise does not disrupt memory because it is kept out of the short-term memory store by some sort of filter that is capable of distinguishing between noise and speech.⁵⁰⁴

Even when told to ignore it, and without any knowledge of the language (in the case of Arabic), participants’ ears were continually drawn to the speech. Verbal material, then, seems to have specialised access to the short-term memory; one cannot help but listen. This may help to explain the longevity of such poetic genres as the dramatic monologue: the possibility of hearing speech finds an eager reader.

⁵⁰²Baddeley, *Human Memory*, p. 20 (original emphasis).

⁵⁰³Baddeley, *Your Memory*, p. 10.

⁵⁰⁴Baddeley, *Your Memory*, p. 58. Original article: Pierre Salame and Alan Baddeley, ‘Effects of background music on phonological short-term memory’, *The Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology Section A: Human Experimental Psychology*, 41: 1 (1989), 107-122.

In the field of neuroscience, researchers have furthered the understanding of this differentiation between vocal and non-vocal sounds. In January 2000, Belin and colleagues announced the discovery of voice-selective areas within the brain. Using fMRI technology, they concluded that ‘these experiments provide strong evidence that the human brain contains regions that are not only sensitive to, but also strongly selective to, human voices’ and compare this to the established finding of face-selective areas of the visual cortex.⁵⁰⁵ Research from Watson and colleagues in 2012 further explored these temporal voice areas (TVAs) within the brain, remarking that ‘the human voice is probably the most common and meaningful sound of our environment’.⁵⁰⁶ This description may highlight why both poets choose to focus on the human voice. Common yet rich in meaning, might the human affinity with voice make something more memorable? Watson’s paper looked at the ‘link between voice memory ability [...] and voice-selective activity’.⁵⁰⁷ By using fMRI technology to measure activity in the TVAs, Watson and colleagues wanted to see if such activity would predict memory performance in a later test. They did indeed find that ‘subjects with higher sound-induced activity in the TVA correctly remembered more voices [...] suggesting a critical role of the TVA in voice cognition’.⁵⁰⁸ However, they also noted that the TVA’s voice preference ‘did not act as a predictor of voice memory performance [...] it was the general sound-induced activity within the TVA [...] that was significantly related to voice memory performance’.⁵⁰⁹ fMRI can show activity, but with dense synaptic networks involved, the intricacies of vocal cognition are likely to remain unknown for a while yet.

Back in 1894 – contemporary with Frost’s first published poem, ‘My Butterfly’ – E. A. Kirkpatrick published an influential ‘An Experimental Study for Memory’. Interested in how a better knowledge of memory systems might influence educational practices, Kirkpatrick carefully observed the difference in memory ability from primary school pupils through to college students. He aimed to ‘determine which of these three kinds of impressions [visual, auditory, motor] are

⁵⁰⁵Pascal Belin, Robert J. Zatorre, Philippe Lafaille, Pierre Ahad and Bruce Pike, ‘Voice-selective areas in human auditory cortex’ *Nature*, 403:6767 (2000): 309-312 (311).

⁵⁰⁶Rebecca Watson, Marianne Latinus, Patricia E. G. Bestelmeyer, Frances Crabbe and Pascal Belin, ‘Sound Induced Activity in Voice Sensitive Cortex Predicts Voice Memory Ability’, *Frontiers in Psychology*, 3.89 (2012): 1-4 (p. 1).

⁵⁰⁷Watson and colleagues, ‘Sound Induced Activity’, p. 1.

⁵⁰⁸Watson and colleagues, ‘Sound Induced Activity’, p. 4.

⁵⁰⁹Watson and colleagues, ‘Sound Induced Activity’, p. 4.

best retained'.⁵¹⁰ Kirkpatrick found that those lists of words which had been presented aurally were the least well remembered, though he points out that in terms of the way participants processed words from any list 'some when they saw the written words thought of the sounds and perhaps retained them as auditory words, while others thought of the visual appearance of the spoken words and retained them as visual words. Many repeated softly the words both oral and written, thus getting motor sensations; and probably many formed mental pictures of the objects named'.⁵¹¹ The experimenter only controlled the mode of presentation and for all the individual differences in 'storing' the information, the resulting averages ranked auditory memory below that of visual and object memory.

Kirkpatrick notes that 'in memory of spoken words, as compared with written, the younger pupils are superior, evidently because they have not had so much practice in dealing with visual as with spoken words', postulating that with the move from orality to literacy comes a shift in mnemonic preferences.⁵¹² I make no claims that either Hardy or Frost read Kirkpatrick's article, merely that this trend for auditory information to be more easily lost had already been noticed before the turn of the century. In February 2014, when psychologists Bigelow and Poremba published an article entitled 'Achilles' Ear?', psychologists were still debating the 'inferior' capability of the memory system in the 'auditory modality'.⁵¹³ Having acknowledged that monkeys 'appear capable of retaining auditory information for only a brief period of time', the experimenters looked at this within human primates.⁵¹⁴ Bigelow and Poremba's second experiment used 'complex naturalistic stimuli likely to be encountered in everyday life. Thus, the auditory stimuli used in this experiment were sound recordings of easily recognizable, everyday events (e.g., dog barking)'.⁵¹⁵ In this way, they brought their findings closer to the types of sounds that Hardy and Frost are interested in – those which can be personalised and hold particular meanings, despite their commonality.⁵¹⁶ However, those sounds

⁵¹⁰E. A. Kirkpatrick, 'An Experimental Study of Memory', *Psychological Review*, 1.6 (1894): 602-09 (p. 602).

⁵¹¹Kirkpatrick, 'An Experimental Study', p. 604.

⁵¹²Kirkpatrick, 'An Experimental Study', p. 606.

⁵¹³Bigelow and Poremba, 'Achilles' Ear?', p. 1.

⁵¹⁴Bigelow and Poremba, 'Achilles' Ear?', p. 1.

⁵¹⁵Bigelow and Poremba, 'Achilles' Ear?', p. 3.

⁵¹⁶The context of a sound is what makes it meaningful. As William James observes 'A faint tap per se is not an interesting sound; it may well escape being discriminated from the general rumor of the

which are ‘easily recognizable’ can be used to build up the reader’s confidence. Regarding sound, Michael Irwin notes an ‘interesting tension between realism and formalism’ in Hardy:

Many of the noises he describes are instantly familiar: we have all listened to winds or waters, or found ourselves aware of approaching footsteps or the ticking of a clock. Since Hardy invokes much that we recognize, and recaptures it so vividly, it is natural to take on trust the many odder and subtler sounds he refers to⁵¹⁷

This interplay between recognition and sound can be manipulated, in order to tempt the reader’s ear. Tapping into the previously heard, the familiar and the obvious is a way, perhaps, for poetic memory to gain an auditory foothold.⁵¹⁸ Like Kirkpatrick, Bigelow and Poremba pitted auditory memory against both visual and tactile memory, finding that it was the weakest in each case (same-day, next-day and next-week recognitions). According to this study, ‘like nonhuman primates, humans are relatively limited in retaining acoustic information’.⁵¹⁹ In this chapter, I wish to consider why both Hardy and Frost stress the modality in which human memory is most fallible and to suggest that the value of sound might be revised. Poetry, more than empirical experimentation, can emphasise the cultural ties which come with the retention of those features (such as accent, or mode of address) which, though ephemeral, help to consolidate group membership and foster feelings of belonging. As this section shows, certain sounds (voice in particular) are attentionally appealing, yet this immediate enthusiasm rarely translates into remembrance. Hardy and Frost advocate a return to the original tempting of the ear in perception and try to maintain the value once afforded voice, seeing it through to memory proper.

The urgency of Hardy/Frostian voices

‘Perhaps, long hence, when I have passed away,
Some other’s feature, accent, thought like mine,

world. But when it is a signal, as that of a lover on the window-pane, it will hardly go unnoticed’ (p. 395, original emphasis).

⁵¹⁷Michael Irwin, *Reading Hardy’s Landscapes* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), pp. 55-56.

⁵¹⁸Sounds, of course, do not have to hark back to the known and the experienced. Paul Fussell points out that ‘one reason modern English poetry can be said to begin with Hardy is that he is the first to invite into poems the sound of ominous gunfire heard across the water’ (p. 74, referring to ‘Channel Firing’ and ‘The Discovery’).

⁵¹⁹Bigelow and Poremba, ‘Achilles’ Ear?’, p. 5.

Will carry you back to what I used to say'
– Hardy, 'She, to Him II'⁵²⁰

Hardy's commitment to reproducing speech sounds in his verse is evident from his poetical notebooks, in his possible titles for the collection that would become *Winter Words*. Among his options are 'Winter Words said in Verse', 'Seemings said in verse' and 'A Wintry Voice | in Various Metres Speaks in Verse' (*PM* 3). One of Hardy's overarching aims with this collection, then, was to 'speak' via his poetry.⁵²¹ With this, I am not simply referring to the lyric 'I', or any given poem's assumed speaker: both Hardy and Frost go further than that detached vocal stance, and write in direct speech, use the dramatic monologue form and stage conversations. Like Hardy's notebook entries above, one of Frost's single statements from an early notebook reads 'Writing Down the Voice', showing a near-identical aim for Frost's poetic practice.⁵²² In praising William Dean Howells, Frost wrote 'I learned from him a long time ago that the loveliest theme of poetry was the voices of people'.⁵²³ An earlier letter admits that 'my conscious interest in people was at first no more than an almost technical interest in their speech' (*LRF1* 265); humans are primarily of interest as auditory beings.⁵²⁴

In a notebook called *Studies, Specimens &c.* c.1865, Hardy writes out words and phrases taken from other poets and underlines rhymes, stresses and words he will define.⁵²⁵ What is noticeable is Hardy's love of sounds: in a long list with no attribution as to author or work, he underlines all of the noises – clanging, pealing, whooping, hoarse, clash, slam and so on. Some words have been underlined again in red crayon at a later date. Other times, Hardy underlines the similar sounding, alliterating words, or words and their cognates. As well as literature, here are found excerpts from 'Thes. (adjs. & subs.)'.⁵²⁶ What is evident here is a poet immersing

⁵²⁰*CP*, p. 15.

⁵²¹A later isolated entry announces 'The History of a Voice in verse' (*PM*, p. 15). In the essay from which Hardy took notes, Coventry Patmore refers to 'the sequence of vocal utterance, represented by written verse', suggesting that verse as a transcription of voice is self-evident ('English Metrical Critics', p. 136).

⁵²²Frost, MS 1178, Notebook c.1918-21, fol. 23^r.

⁵²³*LRF2*, p. 141. See fn. 312 in this volume for the editors tracing of a comparable 'sound of sense' moment in Howells's work.

⁵²⁴In a similarly originary statement, Frost also wrote that 'The first and only marginal notes I ever wrote into a book were single-word descriptions of the tones of the sentences in the first scene or two of Hamlet. That was before I knew what I was doing or what was troubling me' (*LRF2*, p.611).

⁵²⁵These excerpts come from *The Golden Treasury*, the Bible, Shakespeare and a selection of other poets, particularly Swinburne.

⁵²⁶Yale University, CT, Beinecke Library, GEN MSS 111, Richard L. Purdy Collection of Thomas Hardy, 1753-1981, Box 2, 'Studies, Specimens &c.', Notebook c.1865 (fols. 29^v-30^v).

himself in a sonic world, playing with words and sounds as preparatory to his craft. As Dennis Taylor notes, this notebook ‘shows that [Hardy] came to his literary art by way of words and phrases, and only then proceeded to the topical subjects of his *Literary Notebooks*’.⁵²⁷

Both Hardy and Frost populate their pages, allowing their poetry to voice characters otherwise unheard. In the case of Hardy, this is often to bring the voice(s) of the dead back into the realm of the living.⁵²⁸ For Frost, *North of Boston*’s long monologues given by his supposed New England compatriots reveal memorable psychological traits. If Hardy is listening for speech beyond the grave, Frost perhaps listens for how speech betrays a person’s inner life. Both poets, though, choose actual voices to carry their characters to the reader. This privileging of voice can be no accident in its many occurrences.

Hardy’s determination to hear voice beyond the grave is evident from an 1895 note: he hypothesises ‘a person, or family [...] Abnormally developed on the imaginative side. They not only imagine ghosts & personalities in every sound & sight, but converse with them, or about them’ (*PM* 20). It is strange that Hardy should classify this as ‘abnormal’, since his own interest in ghosts is evident throughout his writings, and explored critically by Tim Armstrong.⁵²⁹ ‘Who’s in the Room?’ questions the possibility of a passing spirit, partly because ‘I seem to hear | Somebody muttering firm in a language new’ (503). The speaker of ‘Paying Calls’ finds his friends ‘at home’ in the graveyard:

I spoke to one and other of them
 By mound and stone and tree
 Of things we had done ere days were dim,
 But they spoke not to me. 507

In this final stanza, the speaker (like that of Frost’s ‘The Most of It’) seeks a response, for some sound to travel back to him. In this case, though, the enterprise is futile, since the dead do not speak back. Importantly, ‘death’ and all its cognates are

⁵²⁷Taylor, *Hardy’s Literary Language*, p. 28. See also Dennis Taylor’s third appendix in this same volume for a detailed account of ‘Hardy’s *Studies, Specimens &c. Notebook*’ (pp. 387-92).

⁵²⁸Indeed, for Armstrong, ‘voice [...] usually indicates moments of unusual imaginative influx for Hardy, and almost always, the revivification of a world, a memory, or even a grave which has previously rested inert and dead’ (p. 16).

⁵²⁹See ‘The Ghosts of Thought’ (Armstrong, *Haunted Hardy*, pp. 30-61).

absent from the poem. 'Mound and stone and tree' become metonymic euphemisms which merely mark the 'homes' of these friends.⁵³⁰

Chapter 4 looks more closely at what is lost to (and from) memory in death, but for the purposes of this chapter it is important that one such loss which worries Hardy is that of voice. In the last 'She, to Him' sonnet the deceased speaker regrets that 'I grasp thy amplitudes, of [the new sweetheart] | Ungrasped' (16). 'Amplitudes' cannot help but suggest overtones, and thus sonic signals as well as more generic traits. In this reversal (the dead listening to the living), the dead are peculiarly aurally sensitive. Furthermore, the 'grasp'/'ungrasped' comparison suggests, bizarrely, that those qualities which are ephemeral are better understood by the spirit world. There is a concern for how voice might be recorded, as Hardy's elegies show, but he also displays a more general anxiety about what lives on after death.

The more familiar poem 'Afterwards' allows the speaker to hypothesise about life on earth after his death. Although it displays Hardy's trademark attention to the details of the visual landscape, it also commits to the audioscape. The speaker wonders what those left will 'say' about him, designing possible utterances. This posits the idea that memory is predicated upon speech – that the speaker re-enters the landscape on the utterances of friends. Indeed, Hardy organises his stanzas by painting a scene into which his presence is then spoken:

When the Present has latched its postern behind my tremulous stay,
And the May month flaps its glad green leaves like wings,
Delicate-filmed as new-spun silk, will the neighbours say,
'He was a man who used to notice such things'?

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The detail provided helps further to realise the speaker's hypothesis and truly grant him a place among the living world.

In 'Afterwards' actual words are suggested, but more often than not the reader experiences an unspecified 'calling' in a Hardy poem. 'Woman much missed how you call to me, call to me' – in this famous opening line Emma Hardy's voice is

⁵³⁰From the perspective of literary memory, this phrase seems to recall Wordsworth's 'with rocks and stones and trees' from 'A slumber did my spirit seal' (Wordsworth and Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 199).

not just recalled in memory, but seems to be audible once again.⁵³¹ Not only does her call echo in this first line, but half-recurs with the answering rhyme word of line 3. Again, the reader is caught between the real and the unreal, since ‘an echo, after all, is a paradoxical entity, since it is like a ghost or after-image of a sound, half-way between the physical and the ideal’.⁵³² All that is brought back to the grieving speaker is a ‘voice’, unable to be grasped, unable to be verified, continually in the action of ‘saying’ and ‘calling’, thanks to Hardy’s present participles. Once again, uncertainty is purposely curated around these voices even as they are recognised as sounding, reminiscent of Chapter 2’s ‘somethings’.

In the ‘Poems of 1912-13’, Hardy often posits a figure stuck within unidirectional communication. Speech may make it across the divide, but never firmly enough to secure a response – the same problem which galls Frost’s speaker in ‘The Most of It’. This is true the other way around, as well: in ‘The Haunter’, the ghost points out that she ‘cannot answer the words he lifts me – | Only listen thereto!’ (346). Neither party can make the other certain of her/his voice, and given the premise of the next poem in the sequence, ‘The Voice’, it is interesting to note that the ghost bemoans her ‘always lacking the power to call to him, | Near as I reach thereto!’.⁵³³ In both cases, voice is the attempted medium of memory: if one could be heard, they would be assured remembrance.

One Hardy poem which bespeaks the dead, is ‘Voices from Things Growing in the Churchyard’. It is an odd premise for a poem, focusing as it does on the ‘things’ into which the dead have transformed.⁵³⁴ The opening stanza shows the form used throughout, of one personality per verse with repeated refrain:

⁵³¹Walter J. Ong associates ‘call’ and ‘recall’ with oral culture, contrasting them with the emptiness of the phrase ‘look up something’ in a primary oral culture (*Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York; London, 1982), p. 31).

⁵³²John Hughes, *‘Ecstatic Sound’: Music and Individuality in the Work of Thomas Hardy* (Aldershot; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001) p. 191.

⁵³³Hardy, ‘The Haunter’, p. 346. William W. Morgan comments on the proximity of these two poems: ‘The juxtaposition of “all to him,” “call to him” in the first poem with “call to me,” “all to me” in the second reassures us that we are reading not only poems but also linked groupings of poems under the sure management of a metanarrator whose “voice” is to be found in the artful silence of aesthetic control’ (‘Aesthetics and Thematics in Hardy’s Volumes of Verse: The Example of Time’s Laughingstocks’, in *Thomas Hardy Reappraised: Essays in Honour of Michael Millgate*, ed. by Keith Wilson (Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 2006), pp. 219-244 (p. 228)).

⁵³⁴On this poem see Irwin (p. 55). The similar, though less straightforwardly vocalised, poem ‘Transformations’ is closely read and compared to Wordsworth in Langbaum’s *Thomas Hardy in Our Time* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), pp. 48-51.

These flowers are I, poor Fanny Hurd,
 Sir or Madam,
 A little girl here sepultured.
 Once I flit-fluttered like a bird
 Above the grass, as now I wave
 In daisy shapes above my grave,
 All day cheerily,
 All night eerily!

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Since every stanza (save the last) voices a specific person directly, this initial name readily suggests its homophone ‘heard’; the poem rests on ‘hearing’ these ‘voices’. The grammar is also immediately awkward: ‘these’ several flowers ‘are I’, the singular voice. The poem lends this girl’s death a strange aesthetic veneer: it begins with the literal (‘these flowers are I’), then offers a simile for her past activities (‘like a bird’), into a present-day metaphor aiming at the literal (‘now I wave’). This is further complicated by the enjambment which transforms an action of human agency into that performed by ‘daisy shapes’. By voicing these characters directly, the interplay between person and object is never lost: the liminal space opens up into which these voices speak.

The poem is based upon people Hardy knew: the *Life* notes that he ‘remembered [Fanny Hurd] as a delicate child who went to school with him. [...] The others mentioned in this poem were known to him by name and repute’ (447). Once again Hardy’s poem engages in what Hillis Miller calls ‘the safeguarding of the dead’.⁵³⁵ The final stanza of ‘Voices’ explains the rationale behind the poem:

– And so these maskers breathe to each
 Sir or Madam
 Who lingers there, and their lively speech
 Affords an interpreter much to teach,
 As their murmurous accents seem to come
 Thence hitheraround in a radiant hum

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Hardy’s speaker finds his churchyard visits fruitful because of what he can hear. This sets up an interesting conundrum, though, since these ‘voices’ do not exist in reality and the fragility of the sounds is evident in ‘murmurous accents’ and ‘radiant hum’:

⁵³⁵Hillis Miller, *Distance and Desire*, p. 29.

abstract rather than definitive sounds. Hardy's neologism 'hitheraround' abstracts these sounds further: by making a compound word Hardy keeps the sound both 'hither' (close, nearby, moving in the speaker's direction) and 'around' (encircling, orbiting). Like 'The Haunter', 'near as [these voices] reach thereto', they remain 'hitheraround' and beyond reach: though beguiling, the voiceless fricative 'th' at the start of the polysyllable makes it more a sound than a verifiable voice. The conceit of the spoken remains strong throughout the poem, with even the role of the observer couched in linguistic terms: this requires 'an interpreter'. Hardy focuses on what is 'breathed' by these characters: at once the most human and the most vital act. Furthermore, like 'how some things linger!', Hardy chooses the verb 'linger' for his witness, the verb with particular connotations of chance, indecisiveness and contingency.⁵³⁶ For all that the 'Voices' call out stridently, and in rhythmic refrain, the poem rests on an extremely tentative (and tenuous) connection. Even as Hardy writes voice, he underscores its frailty.

Why 'speak' of the dead on the page? Frost provides one reason in his 'Address at the Dedication of the Davison Memorial Library' (1930).⁵³⁷ Frost points out that 'we don't know how dead a dead man is or live a live man is, but I like to see a person I care for remembered personally as long as possible. One way to get him remembered is with our talk to-day; a better way is with the Library. The time will come when people will ask us for whom it is named' (*CPRF* 100). In the context of this speech, 'our talk today' refers to the speeches and 'the Library' this individual library, but I do not think it too fanciful to suggest that this be opened out to the possibilities for remembrance that orality and literacy offer respectively. There is a significant tension here over which, between voice and the Library (symbolising writing), offers a 'better' form of remembrance. This 'better' can only be in terms of reliability and durability, since to have Davison 'remembered personally' requires an individual sharing her/his memories verbally. As Frost wrote to a friend, 'My inclination is more like talking than writing. I wish I could make you hear'.⁵³⁸ The 'wish' to make things heard, however challenging that might be, remains at the

⁵³⁶This is from Frost's 'The Death of the Hired Man' (*CPPP*, p. 42).

⁵³⁷This honours Wilfred Davison at the Bread Loaf School of English. As Mark Richardson's notes make clear, a library was an appropriate honour for a man who had written a poem entitled 'Give Me No Marble Slab Nor Sculptured Bronze' (*CPRF*, p. 270).

⁵³⁸*LRF1*, p. 308. In this particular case, Frost was trying to describe the sound of the River Gale to John W. Haines: the tension between sonic and textual material is here actualised.

forefront of Frost's poetic intentions. Like Hardy, Frost wishes the dead to remain spoken of, but recognises that writing outlasts those ephemeral utterances: voice's shortcomings may be galling but voice remains valuable in its intimate relation to the person lost.

The sound of sense: The eye versus the ear

‘The page is audible’
– Frost, ‘Vocal Images – Observations’⁵³⁹

In the well-known ‘Poetry and School’ (1951), Frost states that ‘the eye reader is a barbarian. So also is the writer for the eye reader, who needn’t care how badly he writes since he doesn’t care how badly he is read’ (*CPRF* 168). Years of discussing the ear and the eye go into this one published statement. Here, I look back through notebook entries from the beginning of Frost’s poetic career to find the genesis of this argument. This re-ordering of the senses, so that ear is above eye, runs throughout Frost’s writings.⁵⁴⁰ Indeed, Pritchard claims that ‘This promoting of ear over eye is in no way an overstatement or a merely corrective setting of the balance, but absolutely central to the kind of poetry Frost committed himself to writing’.⁵⁴¹ Discussing efficiency in reading, Frost comments that ‘The eye reader might have the advantage in skimming for salient facts[.] The ear reader would have the advantage in getting into the subtler facts that lie in tone implication and style. The ear reader [...] alone has any chance of attaining distinction in knowledge and expression’.⁵⁴² This distinction between ‘salient’ and ‘subtler’ facts between eye and ear mirrors what both poets are asking memory to attend to: not the ‘salient facts’ which are readily incorporated into memory, but those ‘subtler facts’ which reveal different (perhaps more suggestive) details and could enable one to re-evaluate a

⁵³⁹Robert Frost, MS 1178, Box 20, Folder 2 – Lectures delivered at the New School for Social Research, New York, ‘Vocal Images – Observation’, fol. 19^r.

⁵⁴⁰Frost passed on this terminology (and the placement of ear above eye) to Edward Thomas (see Hollis, p. 222). Hollis further suggests that in reviewing Frost’s *North of Boston*, Thomas ‘was returning his ear toward a form of writing that is cadenced and memorable and that propels itself using the rhythms of speech’ (p. 148).

⁵⁴¹Pritchard, *Literary Life*, p. 80. Pritchard also points out – which had passed me by – that in consideration of the ear reader, Frost’s tribute to Amy Lowell is less than complimentary: ‘The writing here is itself so resonant that we almost neglect to notice how it fixed Lowell’s poetry as appealing merely to the eye, flinging “flowers and everything there.” But Frost believed in “ear-reading” rather than “eye-reading”’ (*Literary Life*, p. 175; see *CPRF*, p. 88 for the full text of ‘The Poetry of Amy Lowell’ (1925)).

⁵⁴²MS 1178, Notebook c.1918-1921, fol. 29^r.

previously discarded situation. The ‘ear reader’ here parallels the process of full recognition from Chapter 2, whereas the ‘eye reader [...] skimming for salient facts’ can only ever attain immediate recognition.⁵⁴³

Another notebook entry reads ‘There has been insistance [*sic*] enough on clear images of sight. More important are the clear images of sound. // Good writing deals with things present to the eye of the mind in tones of voice present to the ear of the mind’.⁵⁴⁴ This clarity, though, is near impossible: in his Psychology Notebook, Frost notes as observation 93 ‘Image of the intonation that fades as you try to bring it to the lips[.] Writing by ear’.⁵⁴⁵ The solution to this, Frost told schoolchildren in a 1915 lecture, is ‘The Imagining Ear’, for the difficulty with tones is ‘to note them, *to imagine them again*, and to get them down in writing’ (*CPPP* 687, emphasis mine). Hearing sounds which are not present requires not just memory, but the imagination, telling in light of this chapter’s arguments about reader involvement.

Frost calls for a re-valuing of the ear: in one essay draft he offers ‘a word more. We value the seeing eye already. Time we said something about the hearing ear – the ear that calls up vivid sentence forms’.⁵⁴⁶ It is interesting that Frost pre-empts a current trend in critical theory, which ‘might be called the “anti-ocular” turn’, as Frost purposely cultivates ‘the hearing imagination rather than the seeing imagination’.⁵⁴⁷ While anti-ocularcentrism is a heavily theorised aspect of Continental philosophy (by way of Heidegger), Frost’s statements seem to concur with its basic tenets: to challenge the dominance of the visual paradigm by privileging the ear instead.⁵⁴⁸ When in a more compromising mood, Frost recognises

⁵⁴³Frost’s *A Masque of Mercy* includes a stage direction which also refers to the ‘eye reader’, when Jonah

(*starts to speak, but stops again to listen.*
The writing on the screen must change too fast
For any but the rapidest eye readers)

CPPP 398

⁵⁴⁴Notebook 1912-15, The Papers of Robert Frost 6261, Box 2, Clifton Waller Barrett Library, University of Virginia Library, VA, fol. 28^r.

⁵⁴⁵MS 1178, Notebook c.1911, fol. 26^r.

⁵⁴⁶Robert Frost, ‘On a New Definition of the Sentence’, MS 1178 Box 19, Folder 86, Robert Frost Collection (Rauner Library, Dartmouth College, NH), n.p.. This same phrase also appears in a letter to Sidney Cox from December 1914 (see *LRF1*, p. 234) and the school lecture ‘The Imagining Ear’ (of 1915) opens ‘Mr Browne has alluded to the seeing eye. I want to call your attention to the function of the hearing ear’ (*CPPP*, p. 687).

⁵⁴⁷Adrienne Janus, ‘Listening: Jean-Luc Nancy and the “Anti-Ocular” Turn in Continental Philosophy and Critical Theory’, *Comparative Literature*, 63.2 (2011): 182-202 (p. 182); *LRF1*, p. 210.

⁵⁴⁸Poetry as a genre offers a particular case study for Martin Jay in his *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-century French Thought* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1993), when he charts the move (following Mallarmé) to a more visual poetry. It is also interesting that in preferring the ear, Frost seems to prefigure *The Auditory Culture Reader*’s aim

the dual appeal that poetry has to the senses: ‘the image to the eye and the image to the ear are two equal peaks like the letter M’.⁵⁴⁹ The mixing of the visual and the aural remains: among a list of possible essay/lecture titles, Frost has ‘The Word Image’ and ‘Vocal Reality’ and indeed he went on in 1931 to deliver a lecture at the New School for Social Research, New York, entitled ‘Vocal Images – Observation’.⁵⁵⁰

Poetry offers a rich sensory experience, but Frost clearly displays a preference for one sense over the others. Like his ‘Imagining Ear’ lecture, Frost wrote of imagination in relation to the ear in a letter from 1925 where he claims that some of ‘the most vivid imaginative passages in poetry are of the eye, but more perhaps are [of] the ear’ (*LRF2* 487). The same letter brings psychology into the debate:

Fool psychologists treat the five sense elements in poetry as of equal weight. One of them is nearly the whole thing. The tone-of-voice element is the unbroken flow on which the others are carried along like sticks and leaves and flowers. *LRF2* 486

It is unclear why ‘psychologists’ are thus singled out, but noticeable that Frost engages with sensory perception and its cultural expectations. As an ‘unbroken flow’, ‘tone-of-voice’ appears an omnipresent element as metre in other Frostian formulations. Voice, though, is noticeably aligned with natural imagery.

I noted above that Hardy is committed to the audioscape, and for all that his powers of vision as a writer have garnered much comment, he often taxes the reader’s ear, and in unexpected ways.⁵⁵¹ ‘In the British Museum’ addresses a visitor regarding a ‘time-touched stone’, but by the second stanza sight has been superseded, since ‘you look not quite as if you saw, | But as if you heard’ (381). The rapt visitor admits ‘I am thinking that stone has echoed | The voice of Paul’: the stone is valued for what it has witnessed auditorily. The speaker admits the

of provoking ‘deep listening [...] what might be called agile listening [...] attuning our ears to listen again to the multiple layers of meaning potentially embedded in the same sound’ (Michael Bull and Les Black, Introduction, ‘Into Sound’, *The Auditory Culture Reader*, eds. by Michael Bull and Les Black, *Sensory Formation Series* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2003), pp. 1-18 (p. 3).

⁵⁴⁹MS 1178, Notebook c.1913-1917, fol. 18^r.

⁵⁵⁰MS 1178, Notebook c.1918-1921, fol. 26^r.

⁵⁵¹Tom Paulin’s *The Poetry of Perception* (1975), for instance, has a strong emphasis on visual perception.

imaginative leap needed to believe such a thing, and Hardy uses the penultimate stanza to remind the reader of sound's ephemeral nature:

‘Words that in all their intimate accents
 Patterned upon
That marble front, and were wide reflected,
 And then were gone. 382

Hardy narrates sound's trajectory, from 'intimate' proximity, sent 'wide' and eventually to disappear. There is an interesting contradiction here: a single voice can carry far, but cannot be captured. The stone is valued not for having recorded Paul's voice, but for witnessing it and being a possible reflective surface for those sound waves. Given the consonance of 'intimate accents | Patterned', 'patterned' reads more phonologically than semantically, the reader hearing it as its onomatopoeic sound-sibling 'pattered' so that Paul's words are heard falling like rain 'upon | That marble front' thanks to Hardy's poem.⁵⁵²

When Frost adumbrates his theory of sentence sounds (in the same letter as that about recognition) he assures Bartlett that 'that are apprehended by the ear. They are gathered by the ear from the vernacular and brought into books. [...] The most original writer only catches them fresh from talk, where they grow spontaneously' (*LRF1* 173). Again, Frost visualises the sounds as biological entities, writer-turned-lepidopterist 'catch[ing] them fresh'. The oral/aural component is clear in the progress from 'talk' to 'ear'. Later in the same letter Frost is absolutist, announcing 'The ear does it. The ear is the only true writer and the only true reader' and denouncing those who read too fast: 'eye readers we call them'.⁵⁵³ Here the notebook

⁵⁵²Gillian Beer's 'Hardy: The After-Life and the Life Before' argues, via 'In a Museum' and 'A Kiss', that Hardy draws on contemporary wave theory from Helmholtz via Tyndall (in *Thomas Hardy: Texts and Contexts*, ed. by Phillip Mallett (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 18-30). However, I follow Marjorie Garson's argument that 'the way Hardy develops the image of the wave of energy is not always as recuperative as in the two poems Beer cites' ('Written in Stone: Hardy's Grotesque Sublime', in *Thomas Hardy Reappraised: Essays in Honour of Michael Millgate*, ed. by Keith Wilson (Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 2006), pp. 96-117 (p. 110). Beer builds on the earlier scholarship of Andrew D. Radford, who also sees 'In a Museum' as 'energized not only by the findings of prehistoric archaeology but also by physics' (*Thomas Hardy and the Survivals of Time* (Aldershot: Aldgate, 2003), p. 29).

⁵⁵³*LRF1*, p. 176 (original emphasis). With regard to Chapter 1's findings, it is interesting that Seán Street notes an 'argument between [Edward] Marsh and [D. H.] Lawrence, conducted by post in the latter part of 1913' (*Dymock*, p. 71). Responding to Marsh's attacks on vers libre, Lawrence notes 'it doesn't depend on the ear, particularly, but on the sensitive soul [...] That's why you like "Golden Road to Samarkand" – it fits your habituated ear' (qtd. in *Dymock*, p. 71). The 'ear reader', too, was part of the expectancy debate in versification.

entries are rendered in prose clear enough to teach Frost's former student 'the most important thing I know'.

In drawing on words heard, Frost is aligning orality and literacy; indeed, both spheres are complicit in poetry for the eye and the ear. Believing that poetry grows out of the vernacular, Frost was aware that with *North of Boston* he was dropping 'to an everyday level of diction that even Wordsworth kept above' (*LRF1* 132). Wordsworth's famous dictum that poetry should use the 'real language of men' had a profound influence on both Frost and Hardy. Indeed, in a 1915 interview, Frost praised his predecessor with 'As language only really exists in the mouths of men, here again Wordsworth was right in trying to reproduce in his poetry not only the words [...] but their sound'.⁵⁵⁴ Frost purposely aligns himself within a tradition of writing sounds.

Other researchers have elaborated on the dialect voices that both Hardy and Frost manage to cultivate on the page,⁵⁵⁵ but here I focus on the way they transcribe local oral material, converting orality into literary memory. In a later letter of 1913, Frost writes that 'in "North of Boston" you are to see me performing in a language absolutely unliterary. What I would like is to get so I would never use a word or combination of words that I hadn't heard used in running speech. I bar words and expressions I have merely seen. You do it on your ear' (*LRF1* 163-64, original emphasis). This division between the spoken and the written troubles Frost during his England years and around his publishing *North of Boston*. His notebook at this time retorts 'we see so many strange words never heard in speech when we read an English book we come to think that all book language should be a thing by itself'.⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵⁴Qtd. in *Robert Frost on Writing*, p. 154.

⁵⁵⁵For Hardy see Patricia Ingham 'Thomas Hardy and the Dorset Dialect', in *Five Hundred Years of Words and Sounds*, eds. by E. G. Stanley and D. Gray (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1983), pp. 84-91, and Norman Page 'Hardy and the English Language', in *Thomas Hardy: The Writer and His Background*, ed. by Norman Page (London: Bell & Hyman, 1980), pp. 151-72, among others. Dennis Taylor's *Hardy's Literary Language* has a section entitled 'Hardy and the "Dialect" of the Tribe' (pp. 29-95) as well as two further sections on 'Dialect Words' (pp. 159-72; pp. 179-85). Frost and dialect is a troublesome question, since Tyler Hoffman notes Frost's 'own rejection of dialect' (*Politics of Poetry*, p. 180), though this is more to do with Amy Lowell's more extreme forays into representing New England dialect. Writing to Lowell in 1917, Frost offers that she might include in her *Modern Tendencies in American Poetry* that 'RF [...] doesn't put dialect into the mouths of his people because not one of them, not one, spoke dialect' (*LRF1*, p. 581). Cox, Brower and indeed most critics, though, comment on Frost's language and place this within the regional context of New England, whether or not 'dialect' is used as a term. Critics would be happier perhaps to consider Frost's colloquialisms instead.

⁵⁵⁶MS 6261, Notebook 1912-1915, fols. 7^r-7^v. On this distinction between language heard and language read in books, Frost owes something to his literary predecessor, Thoreau, and the latter's chapter on 'Reading' in *Walden* (see pp. 92-93). A 1915 interview of Frost by William Stanley

Although one might expect that Hardy's rural Wessex characters would befit oral rather than literary culture, there is a pride to 'The Harvest-Supper' that 'Nell led the songs of long ago | She'd learnt from never a book' (777): this is learned and passed on by ear.

A running theme in Frost's writings on poetry is that one must be able to hear what is on the page; therefore, it must be drawn from actual and current speech.⁵⁵⁷ This disjoin between the read and the heard was under contemporary debate: as Elaine Barry observes 'When Ezra Pound talks of "book words" as distinct from words one could "actually say," when he asserts the importance of natural speech rhythms [...] he is reiterating, quite independently, one of Frost's most insistent critical ideas'.⁵⁵⁸ In early 1914, Frost explained the relation between the heard and the read to Sidney Cox:

The living part of the poem is the intonation entangled somehow in the syntax idiom and meaning of a sentence. It is only there for those who have heard it previously in conversation. It is not for us in any Greek or Latin poem because our ears have not been filled with the tones of Greek and Roman talk. It is the most volatile and at the same time important part of poetry. It goes and the language becomes a dead language, the poetry dead poetry.

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'Conversation' becomes a valuable marker for poetic diction here and noticeably it is 'Greek and Roman talk' rather than the more formal (and perhaps therefore more expected) 'speech'. If the test of poetry is that the reader has 'heard it previously', then poetry, for Frost, engages precisely with auditory memory.

Hardy's views on dialect bear comparison, as they concern language's 'life'. However, there is a difference in the way the two poets seek to stimulate auditory memory. While Frost wants the reader to recognise language as 'previously heard', Hardy attempts to keep local language in circulation:

Braithwaite claims that 'The poet was in his twentieth year when he realized that the speech of books and the speech of life were far more fundamentally different than was supposed' (qtd. in *Robert Frost on Writing*, pp. 150-51).

⁵⁵⁷Frost uses his 1918 school lecture 'The Unmade Word or "Fetching and Far-Fetching"' to define to pupils 'two kinds of language: the spoken language and the written language – our everyday speech which we call the vernacular; and a more literary, sophisticated, artificial, elegant language that belongs to books', denigrating 'this literary, artificial English' and asserting that 'I, myself, could get along very well without this bookish language altogether' (*CPPP*, p. 694).

⁵⁵⁸Barry, 'Frost as a Literary Critic', p. 4.

Dialect is the only pass key to anything like intimacy. I would not preserve dialect in its entirety, but I would extract from each dialect those words that have no equivalent in standard English and then use them; they would be most valuable, and our language would be greatly enriched thereby. Dialect is sadly dying out, and children down here in Dorset often have to ask their parents the meaning of a word. Conversation, therefore, is in quite a transition stage now in these parts.⁵⁵⁹

Living memory, as Frost recognises, is about usage: Hardy does not seek to ‘preserve’ words as relics, but to renew dialect words’ lease on life. Importantly, Hardy acknowledges the ‘value’ of dialect words to verbalise certain sentiments which cannot otherwise be expressed.⁵⁶⁰ While Frost condemns Latin and Greek above as ‘dead languages’, Wessex dialect is ‘dying’, the difference between knowledge and ignorance just a single generation (‘children [...] have to ask their parents’).⁵⁶¹ Conversation is ‘in quite a transition stage’, something which could be both represented in and aided by poetry. Unlike his London-based publishers and critics, Hardy was experiencing this ‘transition’ and while there was ‘objection to my use of local Wessex words’ because they were deemed ‘obsolete’, Hardy avers ‘they are not obsolete here’: Hardy is faithful to his local soundscape.⁵⁶² He continues:

I have no sympathy with the criticism which would treat English as a dead language – a thing crystallised at an arbitrarily selected stage of its existence, and bidden to forget that it has a past and deny that it has a future.⁵⁶³

Like Frost’s statements above, Hardy widens his gaze to a pronouncement on ‘language’ itself. Much as Frost’s insistence on language ‘living in the mouth’, Hardy refuses to see language as ‘crystallised’, aware always of its evolution and, as

⁵⁵⁹Qtd. in *Thomas Hardy Remembered*, p. 7.

⁵⁶⁰This notion of uniqueness is repeated in a 1901 interview when Hardy asks if dialect words ‘supply a want in the language – if they express an idea which cannot otherwise be so accurately or briefly expressed – why may not one attempt to preserve them?’ (qtd. in Ray, p. 7).

⁵⁶¹However, Hardy does choose to immortalise ‘Liddell and Scott (On the Completion of their Lexicon)’ in verse, with Liddell incredulous that he’s moved “‘So far away from sound theology | To dialects and etymology; | Words, accents not to be breathed by men | Of any country ever again!’” (pp. 844-45). Though a comic poem, this consideration of dying dialect is sobering given Hardy’s other works.

⁵⁶²Qtd. in *Thomas Hardy Remembered*, pp. 36-37.

⁵⁶³Qtd. in *Thomas Hardy Remembered*, p. 37.

above, ‘transition’.⁵⁶⁴ Where Hardy differs from Frost is in arguing for language’s ‘past’ as well as how it is recognisably intoned in the present. Hardy seeks to remember a linguistic subset which is in the process of being forgotten. Barry claims that Frost ‘was not interested in idioms and intonations for their quaintness, or their national or local flavor’, a statement with which I cannot fully agree.⁵⁶⁵ Though a world away from Synge (Barry’s point of comparison), Frost’s ‘undoctored language [...] gives us the sense of eavesdropping’; yes, but on particular characters located in particular places.⁵⁶⁶ By contrast, Hardy aims for readers to eavesdrop on Wessex, a locality with its own linguistic traditions which did not necessarily map onto England more widely.

As the reviews quoted above suggest, *North of Boston* was received as a speech-centric work. Many of the local figures also speak a sort of dialect, further specialising the speech-sounds heard. Similarly, Hardy was using his writing to try to capture voices which were dying out. Noticeably, *The Athenaeum* criticises *The Woodlanders* because ‘people talk as no people ever talked before, or perhaps we should rather say as no people ever talk now’.⁵⁶⁷ Part of the argument for Hardy’s lack of realism is in his remembering voices rather than depicting contemporaneous speakers. Hardy’s reply is an awkward response to ‘a somewhat vexed question’, but importantly he notes that ‘in the printing of standard speech hardly any phonetic principle at all is observed; and if a writer attempts to exhibit on paper the precise accents of a rustic speaker he disturbs the proper balance of a true representation by unduly insisting on the grotesque element’.⁵⁶⁸ As John Hughes notes, ‘Hardy was, with respect to his urban readership, inevitably a beneficiary of this painful process of loss, becoming both historian *and* laureate of the passing rural tradition’.⁵⁶⁹ As shown above, what Hardy really ‘insists’ on (to borrow his verb) is fidelity to the locally spoken.

However, Chapman highlights Hardy’s prefaces as suggesting that ‘Hardy was concerned that his work should not be read as only the quaint record of a distinct

⁵⁶⁴On Hardy’s particular interest in the word ‘crystallised’, see Taylor, *Hardy’s Literary Language*, p. 221.

⁵⁶⁵Barry, ‘Frost as a Literary Critic’, p. 13.

⁵⁶⁶Barry, ‘Frost as a Literary Critic’, p. 13.

⁵⁶⁷‘Novels of the Week’, *The Athenaeum*, 2665 (23 November 1878): 654 (p. 654).

⁵⁶⁸Thomas Hardy, ‘Dialect in Novels’, *The Athenaeum*, 2666 (30 November 1878): 688 (p. 688).

⁵⁶⁹Hughes, *Ecstatic Sound*, p. 159 (original emphasis).

way of life which was vanishing'.⁵⁷⁰ In publishing and publicising these voices, Hardy was offering them both presence and the present, rather than merely elegy or eulogy. In this he differs from dialect poet, William Barnes, whom Hardy himself described as 'a complete repertory of forgotten manners, words, and sentiments' who persisted 'year after year in writing in a fast-perishing language'.⁵⁷¹ Hardy was not out on such a linguistic limb, but nevertheless his poetry displays a keenness to show how speech differentiates by region. In Dennis Taylor's assessment, 'Hardy made a conscious decision not to be a dialect poet like Barnes; yet from Barnes he learnt that non-standard dialects are as valid and expressive as the standard language'.⁵⁷² It is also important to note that academic interest in dialect was growing at this time and that 'the pioneers of modern phonological and linguistic study were Hardy's contemporaries'.⁵⁷³ In one example of many from the letters, Hardy informs Professor John Hales of King's College London that 'the expression "good-now" is still much in use in the interior of this country though it is dying away hereabout'.⁵⁷⁴ A local listener, Hardy noted the evolution of language, and particularly the passing away of certain terms.⁵⁷⁵

This trait of evoking the past led Edward Thomas, in 1915, to 'notice something in [Hardy's] poetry which I hope I may with respect call rustic, and, what

⁵⁷⁰Chapman, *Language*, p. 26.

⁵⁷¹The first quotation here is from Hardy's obituary of Barnes for the *Athenaeum* and the second from Hardy's introduction to his own edition of *Select Poems of William Barnes* (1908). Both are quoted in *Thomas Hardy's Personal Writings*, on p. 101 and p. 79 respectively.

⁵⁷²Dennis Taylor, *Hardy's Literary Language*, p. 10. Taylor also has a section entitled 'The Lesson of Barnes' (pp. 82-86) and charts a change in attitude from Hardy towards William Barnes, that 'Hardy's last note on Barnes, in 1918, is much more critical than his 1879 essay' (p. 84). Barnes also 'made Hardy aware of poetic forms – Welsh, Persian, Italian – which he might never have encountered in his own reading and which he used in his poems' (Ralph W. V. Elliott, *Thomas Hardy's English*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), p. 27). See also Levy Turner's 'Appendix II: A Note on Thomas Hardy's Poetry', which pairs individual poems together and looks at Barnes's metrical, as well as lexical, influence on Hardy (*William Barnes*, pp. 186-90).

⁵⁷³Chapman, *Language*, p. 33.

⁵⁷⁴1.277. The letter continues:

Its tone is one of conjectural assurance, its precise meaning being "you may be sure,": and such phrases as "I'll warrant", "methinks", "sure enough", would be used as alternatives. The American "I guess" is near it. 1.277

Hardy also corresponded with philologist Joseph Wright (3.42) and editor of the OED, Sir Gilbert Murray (4.312-13), about Dorset dialect and often with Edward Clodd about local folklore.

⁵⁷⁵Netta Syrett remembers that Hardy 'seemed interested to hear that my mother was a West Country woman, and that I recognized many of the words and phrases she used – generally in fun, but sometimes naturally – in the talk of his country folk. I asked if those words and phrases were still current in the West Country, and he regretfully shook his head. They were fast dying out, he told me. Even the word maid for girl which my mother often used [...] one heard less and less frequently. The language was becoming stereotyped' (qtd. in *Thomas Hardy Remembered*, pp. 152-53, original emphasis).

is much the same thing, old-fashioned. It enables him to mingle elements unexpectedly'.⁵⁷⁶ Compliment as Thomas meant it, 'rustic' had become near-synonymous with 'old-fashioned' by 1915, no doubt in part to do with increased urbanisation and transportation links between regions. Indeed, in Hardy's poem 'The Pity of It', hearing dialect is facilitated by being 'afar | From rail-track':

I walked in loamy Wessex lanes, afar
From rail-track and from highway, and I heard
In field and farmstead many an ancient word
Of local lineage like 'Thu bist', 'Er war' 542

Written in 1915 and highlighting such phrases as 'Ich woll', the poem of course 'pities' that England and Germany should be at war, and ends cursing whosoever bred enmity between 'kin folk kin tongued'.⁵⁷⁷ I, though, am concerned with this poem's emphasis on speech and its recuperation of local voices in decline: another 'pity' is that this linguistic heritage is itself dying out.⁵⁷⁸ As part of his introduction to his 1908 selection of William Barnes' poetry, Hardy notes that since Barnes' death, education 'has gone on with its silent and inevitable effacements, reducing the speech of this country to uniformity, and obliterating every year many a fine old local word'.⁵⁷⁹ The earlier essay 'The Dorsetshire Labourer' (1883) also sees education as pitting 'the unwritten, dying, Wessex English' against 'the printed tongue'.⁵⁸⁰ Like the continuation of 'The Pity of It', it is the loss of words 'as [people] speak' (542) which is felt by Hardy: for all the published material, the local colour of voice was being effaced. His language is forceful: that the 'local' might be 'obliterated' serves as all the more reason for preserving it in verse.⁵⁸¹

⁵⁷⁶Qtd. in James Gibson and Trevor Johnson, *Thomas Hardy Poems: A Casebook* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1979), p. 71.

⁵⁷⁷Elliott points out that this is 'a thought somewhat less elegantly expressed in *The Dynasts*, II.i.7: "The lingo of this place [Tilsit] has an accent akin to English"' (*Thomas Hardy's English*, p. 99).

⁵⁷⁸This sense of needing to be far from the reach of the railway in order to (re)discover the past comes through strongly in a 1921 letter to Edward Hudson in which Hardy writes 'I fear that the old type of country waggon, curved & painted on the front & back with conventional flowers, tendrils, &c., has nearly disappeared, if not quite. A person might find a decrepit one by penetrating into the recesses of this county, away from railways' (6.83).

⁵⁷⁹Qtd. in *Thomas Hardy's Personal Writings*, p. 76.

⁵⁸⁰Qtd. in *Thomas Hardy's Personal Writings*, p. 170.

⁵⁸¹Hardy took down notes from an 1876 *Saturday Review* article reviewing J. P. N. Land's *The Principles of Hebrew Grammar*. His interest in Hebrew concerns the 'Death of a language. After the dispersion [of the Jews] Heb. gradually ceased to be a spoken language' (*LNTHI*, p. 85). However, Hardy further notes that 'Arabic, has the unique advantage of being a still spoken as well as an ancient tongue' as well as the 'Careful conservation' of Hebrew via 'grammatical schools, & [...] the

Frost occasionally had to fight similar battles to Hardy in defending his diction. When Leonidas W. Payne Jr. sent Frost a list of ‘errors’(!) he had found in the *Collected Poems* (1930), Frost refused to bow to literary language:

Codlin should be in your dictionary. It is a form still in use among apple men. Codling is getting the better of it as language goes more and more to school. Codlin is to codling as leggin is to legging, as interval is to intervale.⁵⁸² *Codlin*’ would look funny in any book of mine. I havent [*sic*] dropped a g that way in a lifetime of writing.⁵⁸³

Like Hardy, who similarly saw education as standardising the language, Frost stands against what is now found in ‘school’. ‘Codlin’ has currency for Frost, and ‘among apple men’. Hardy would not have questioned the usage, ‘codlin-tree’ appearing as it does in Hardy’s own ‘A Bird-Scene at a Rural Dwelling’.⁵⁸⁴ The ‘rural dwelling’ gives rise to such words are these, which appear as linguistic anomalies to the professorial Payne. ‘Codlin’ is an example of ‘a fine old local word’ for Frost, one which he puts into wider circulation through his verse and which keeps faith with contemporary oral, rather than literary, culture.⁵⁸⁵

Although Hardy never wrote explicitly of an ‘ear reader’, as did Frost, critics have noticed that ‘it comes instinctively to him to depict a scene partly, sometimes even wholly, through what meets the ear’ and this ‘can enable his readers to hear likewise’.⁵⁸⁶ For Chapman, Hardy ‘was extremely sensitive to speech, both formal and colloquial’.⁵⁸⁷ As I wish to posit, this focus on speech simulates the reader’s own hearing and draws upon the auditory memory. While other features

invention of signs for vowels, accents, &c’ (*LNTI*, p. 85). Hardy’s interest in a given language’s life was not restricted to those he knew.

⁵⁸²Frost had previously had to debate with his publishers over using *Mountain Interval* rather than ‘intervale’ as the title of his 1916 collection (and recruited an eminent philologist to help him make his case; see *LRF* 1 477-83), presumably giving rise to its use as an example here.

⁵⁸³Qtd. in *Robert Frost on Writing*, p. 106 (original emphasis).

⁵⁸⁴The birds of Hardy’s poem flee upwards ‘to the crooked neighbouring codlin-tree’ (p. 701).

⁵⁸⁵Frost is not new in designating the ear as poetry’s organ: Isobel Armstrong points out that ‘Both Hopkins and Swinburne are preoccupied with living speech rather than the written word, with the oral and aural sound’, even if that manifests differently in their respective poetry (*Victorian Poetry*, p. 396). Furthermore, Meredith Martin’s chapter epigraphs delineate a history to Frost’s ‘ear reader’ (whether or not he was aware of this): ‘A word exists as truly for the eye as for the ear’ (Richard Chevenix Trench, *English Past and Present* (1855), qtd. in *Rise of Meter*, p. 53); ‘It is quite plain that writing is but an external and necessarily imperfect vesture, while the true and natural and real form of language is that which is made of sound, and addressed to the ear’ (John Earle, ‘Of Prosody’, *The Philology of the English Tongue* (1873), qtd in *Rise of Meter*, p. 48).

⁵⁸⁶Michael Irwin, *Reading Hardy’s Landscapes*, p. 38, p. 42.

⁵⁸⁷Chapman, *Language*, p. 32.

(like the strong constraints of rhyme and metre) might increase chances of rote memory, the sound of sense is varied and intriguing enough to promote gist memory of the kind that Frost's 'somethings' inspire in the reader.⁵⁸⁸ This is not necessarily memory assured, but memory triggered – an active process in the making.

Using Chapman's analysis of Hardy, it is interesting to consider Frost, with his love of 'sentence sounds' alongside the fact that 'not all speech utterances conform to the grammarian's idea of a sentence at all'.⁵⁸⁹ Frost informs Bartlett that 'the best place to get the abstract sound of sense is from voices behind a door that cuts off the words. Ask yourself how these sentences would sound without the words in which they are embodied'.⁵⁹⁰ After offering three examples, Frost declares 'these sounds are summoned by the audile [*sic*] imagination' (*LRF1* 123). Noticeably, Frost often writes in terms of 'sounds', rather than 'words'.⁵⁹¹ Versed as societies are in verbal communication, the cadences of speech are rich in meaning, even when the phonological appears stripped of the semantic. Words here become the 'body' in which sound becomes flesh, again suggesting a primacy to sound which is more rooted in experience; words are a useful medium of expression, but they add to a pre-existing communication. As Frost notes in his 'points of recognition' letter a year later, 'Remember that the sentence sound often says more than the words' (*LRF1* 176): in gesturing towards speech, the page could be put upon to suggest more than was literally written. This also links to sound's superior possibilities, since it is the more social medium: as Walter Ong points out, 'sight isolates, sound incorporates'.⁵⁹² The sound of sense was also explicitly mnemonic, since an earlier 1911 letter asks that 'we renew in memory from time to time the image of the living voice that informs the sentences'.⁵⁹³ Sound, and speech in particular, derives part of its meaning from the things associated with it, those things in memory. However,

⁵⁸⁸'Gist memory' is the name given (in psychology) to the ability to remember the overall import of something.

⁵⁸⁹Chapman, *Language*, p. 125.

⁵⁹⁰*LRF1*, p. 122. For a detailed political reading of Frost's 'sound of sense' see Tyler Hoffman's *Robert Frost and the Politics of Poetry*.

⁵⁹¹Frost also spoke of going 'a-lecturing on the Sound of Poetry', *LRF1*, p. 353). See *LRF1* p. 316, p. 327 and p. 368 for further references to the lecture often given under the title 'The Sound of Poetry'. In particular, Frost notes that 'it's the colleges I look to for the chance to say certain things on the sound of poetry that are going to trouble me as long as they remain unsaid' (*LRF1*, pp. 367-68).

⁵⁹²*Orality and Literacy*, p. 72.

⁵⁹³*LRF1*, p. 58. This links also to Frost's later statements (discussed above) of recognition of speech sounds only existing in speech one has heard and not Roman or Greek 'talk' (see *LRF1*, pp.163-64; p. 167).

due to the vitality of ‘the living voice’, the present is often sought to help maintain memory.

As ear, rather than eye, writers, both Hardy and Frost not only insist on asking the reader to hear, but foreground poetry as a medium for transmitting the vernacular which, especially in the early decades of the twentieth century, was falling out of both common parlance and cultural memory. Hardy admits in a letter that with *Wessex Poems* ‘I tried to popularize some good old English words, still living, down here, but I was met with opposition by the reviewers’ (4.318). These ‘good old words’ depend not only on geographical placement for their life, but also their ability to satisfy a reading public. Local words and literary expectations were at odds in *Wessex Poems*. Like the tones Frost claims are ‘living in the mouth’, Hardy, too, wants to preserve the ‘living’ on the page, despite the inevitable compromises which this entails.

‘Sing, Ballad-singer’: Becoming a bard

[Oct] 22. [1924] In car with F. to the barn at the back of Kingston Maurward old manor house, where as a child I heard the village young women sing the ballads.’
– Thomas Hardy⁵⁹⁴

Verse as song goes back to the figure of the rhapsode and the bard within ancient traditions of oral poetry. Both Hardy and Frost were interested in the bard as a manifestation of local wisdom: a person whose voice could speak through the ages for a community. A negotiation between the eye and the ear, Wesling determines that ‘the bardic is print culture’s nostalgia for oral culture’.⁵⁹⁵ The bardic returned them to the vernacular, and a style which was not necessarily popular with all critics.⁵⁹⁶ Frost questioned ‘Is Poetry Highbrow or Lowbrow. The ballads are one and Comus is the other. The distinction in poetry has no significance’, but for some critics it did.⁵⁹⁷ In an interview towards the end of his life, Frost said ‘All I do is what the ancient bards did. I wander around, doin’ some reading. I just go around, a

⁵⁹⁴*Life*, p. 460.

⁵⁹⁵Donald Wesling, ‘Difficulties of the Bardic: Literature and the Human Voice’, *Critical Inquiry*, 8.1 (1981): 69-81 (p. 73).

⁵⁹⁶The *Saturday Review* (1899) marks out ‘four of the other ballads’ in *Wessex Poems* as ‘some of the most amazing balderdash that ever found its way into a book of verse’ (qtd. in *Thomas Hardy Poems* p. 42).

⁵⁹⁷MS 1178, Notebook c.1918-1921, fol. 24^r.

good deal like a troubadour's life, that sort of thing'.⁵⁹⁸ Although this is somewhat posturing, it shows Frost's awareness of the traditions with which he was intentionally aligning himself. With bards no longer a feature of contemporary cultural life, Hardy and Frost were both harking back to past traditions. According to Meyers, 'Frost preferred popular to classical music and was very fond of ballads [...] a well-known old ballad singer [was] invited to sing and play at the Bread Loaf School', where Frost worked.⁵⁹⁹ Frost also wrote the Introduction to *Ballads Migrant in New England*, where he noted,

Balladry belongs to the none too literate and its spirit, and probably the spirit of all poetry, is safest in the keeping of the none too literate – people who know it by heart where it can weather and season properly. Ballads lead their life in the mouths and ears of men by hearsay like bluebirds and flickers in the nest holes of hollow trees. CPRF 171

Ballads connect poetry with oral culture and the continued transforming of verbal memory. They are of 'safest keeping' by living in speech rather than on the page, and written ballads are a compromise of this; Frost awards their ownership to those who cannot read, only hear. An earlier draft of this introduction had ballads safest with 'the none too bookish', again distancing them from literary and print culture.⁶⁰⁰ Similarly, when discussing Hardy's poetry, Langbaum notes that Hardy 'draws on observed folklore which, as the mythology of the illiterate, is older and more fundamental than the myths available through the literary tradition'.⁶⁰¹ The vulnerable vitality of ballads is evident in their sensitive residences – 'mouths and ears [...] by hearsay'. Once again, Frost places poetry at a liminal location, one which cannot be tethered to, only strengthened by shared memory. This strange little essay emphasises the life which ballads lead independent of print culture, claiming 'they have the vitality to stay game at large [...] You won't see the ballads of this

⁵⁹⁸Arthur S. Harris, Jr., 'A Visit with Robert Frost', *Think* (March 1957): 7-9 (p. 7), in Harvard University, MA, Houghton Library, HOU b 88M-82, Box 2 Folder 2, 'Robert Frost Additional Papers'.

⁵⁹⁹Meyers, *Robert Frost*, p. 71. Compare this with Ezra Pound's idea, in 'How to Read', that 'For practical contact with all past poetry that was actually sung in its own day I suggest that each dozen universities combine in employing a couple of singers who understand the meaning of words. Men like Yves Tinayre and Robert Maitland are available' ('How to Read', in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. by T. S. Eliot (New York: New Directions, 1935), pp. 15 -40 (p. 39, original emphasis), where Tinayre and Maitland are both classically trained singers).

⁶⁰⁰MS 1178, Box 19 Folder 60, 'Introduction to Ballads Migrant in New England, circa 1953'.

⁶⁰¹Langbaum, *Thomas Hardy*, p. 30.

book going back from here in print to alter the versions of the singers they were found on' (*CPRF* 171). Perhaps an overstatement, this at least recognises Frost's awareness of ballads' origins as worldly rather than textual.

As well as writing his own ballads, Hardy was known to be interested in balladry.⁶⁰² Edmund Gosse enquired about 'Let's go a shooting, said Richard to Robin' (1.217) and following a question about the ballad used in *Under the Greenwood Tree*, Hardy replied:

I have been unable to meet with a person who remembers the song about which you inquire; though some old people still sing it in this county. [...] the song, as sung in this neighbourhood, has always been [...] as far as I know – orally transmitted only 1.198-99

Hardy's experience of ballads is worldly as well as literary: these are songs he has heard first-hand.⁶⁰³ In this letter, as in several others, there is the sense of ballads passing out of existence as their singers die off. That they are 'orally transmitted only' gives ballads an immediacy and vibrancy, but also makes them susceptible to loss. In October 1924, Hardy showed his second wife 'the old barn at the back of Kingston Maurward. Here, as a small boy, he had listened to village girls singing old ballads'.⁶⁰⁴ Memory is evidently implicated in writing ballads for Hardy, in passing on textually those traditions he received aurally.⁶⁰⁵ While I stress the role that ballads played in Hardy's life, I also acknowledge Hardy's dedication to the textual tradition of ballads. As Taylor notes, Hardy's 'balladry was consistent with his interest in

⁶⁰²See 2.23 and 3.19. Richard H. Taylor also notes that Hardy 'intended to read [...] or buy' Childs's 'English & Scottish Popular Ballads' (*Personal Notebooks of Thomas Hardy*, p. 99).

⁶⁰³I stress the real-life experiences of ballads for both Hardy and Frost in part to separate them from those 'Middle-class poets from Tennyson to Kipling [who] often seized upon (and plundered) the ballad as a way of reaching a popular audience' without any personal connection to this tradition (Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics* (London; New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 161).

⁶⁰⁴*Life*, p. 460. The episode ends, however, with him wishing 'he had not endeavoured to revive a scene from a distant past. Almost certainly he was the only human being left of that once gay party'. There is a tension here over the appropriateness of returning to past locations. For all of Hardy's many poems featuring revenants and detailing returns, this unease is also present. 'He Revisits His First School' opens 'I should not have shown in the flesh, | I ought to have gone as a ghost; | It was awkward, unseemly almost, | Standing solidly there as when fresh' (p. 511). On occasion, to return is 'a garish thing, better undone' (p. 512).

⁶⁰⁵Interestingly, Hardy was seen as a contemporary ballad-maker, not least in America where magazine publication ensured the success of 'The Fire at Tranter Sweatley's' in 1875 (later published in *Wessex Poems* as 'The Bride-Night Fire'; see Hardy's letters 1.40) and the 1903 success of 'A Trampwoman's Tragedy' (3.84; 4.4; 4.79).

other metrical forms which were undergoing historical development or exploration' in the later nineteenth century.⁶⁰⁶

The power of ballads derives from the near-incantatory metre. A ballad-singer continually relates stories; 'to tell' might be considered the bard's verb. Yet this particular verb breaks down under pressure.⁶⁰⁷ There is an anguish to Frost's early poem 'Revelation', that in order to be understood, 'all who hide too well away | Must speak and *tell* us where they are' (*CPPP* 28, emphasis mine). The speaker has already recognised 'We make ourselves a place apart | Behind light words', a textual barrier, despite wanting 'someone really [to] find us out' (*CPPP* 27). Yet this same medium of remove – words – is called upon to inaugurate revelation. The agitation of this poem lies in the knowledge that no one can ever truly 'tell', either to offer explanation or to recognise the signs.⁶⁰⁸ The not-giving also makes for a successful ballad: Hardy's very obvious 'The Ballad-Singer', with its rousing stanza openings – 'Sing, Ballad-singer, raise a hearty tune' (239) – has the ability to be anticipated, but not to make a long-lasting impression, in part because all has been told and nothing is left for the reader to reveal, or attempt to reveal. 'The Ballad-Singer' is a peculiar case because the speaker is asking that the ballad make him 'forget [...] she whom I loved well' (239). The overall import of the tune remains, but the majority of the poem is forgettable.⁶⁰⁹ Like those recognitions discussed in Chapter 2, ballads have a peculiar relationship with revelation: formally, they appear simple, yet their content asks to be deciphered – even as they may ultimately suggest there is no conclusion to be found. In this way, ballads anchor the memory (with their assured expectations) and also insist on further encoding (as the reader engages with what is being handed

⁶⁰⁶Taylor, *Hardy's Metres*, p. 55. See pp. 54-55 for an overview of developments in the collection of ballads.

⁶⁰⁷Not least in 'Eros Turannos', perhaps the finest ballad written by Edwin Arlington Robinson, Frost's alternately admired and disliked near-contemporary (see *Selected Poems of Edwin Arlington Robinson*, ed. by Morton Dauwen Zabel (New York: Collier Books, 1966), p. 128).

⁶⁰⁸This verb has its most poignant demand in the first letter Frost sent to Edward Thomas' wife, Helen, following Thomas' death (as picked up in Chapter 4): 'I want to see him to tell him something. I want to tell him, what I think he liked to hear from me, that he was a poet. I want to tell him that I love those he loved and hate those he hated [...] I had meant to talk endlessly with him still' (*LRFI* 550).

⁶⁰⁹I mean to suggest here that the poem is cognitively forgettable, because there is not enough rhythmic variation or narrative interest. This is from the perspective of a reader; obviously, as Indy Clark points out, the speaker of the poem 'seeks a ballad to erase the actual difficulties of his present moment, but as the repetition and increasing desperation of the final stanza suggest, he cannot forget' (*Thomas Hardy's Pastoral*, p. 1).

on). While the ballad-maker tells, s/he neglects to tell all, asking the reader to provide part of the message, and thus the memory.

Like Frost, Hardy is known as a regional poet, often cultivating local voices in verse. However, his ballads shift away from representing folk-speech in dialect and more towards the telling of local stories.⁶¹⁰ Thom Gunn claims that ‘the single most important influence on [Hardy] is that of the Ballads, and the majority of his poems derive either directly or indirectly from them’.⁶¹¹ This can be seen in the early stanzas of ‘The Voice’, which seem to elongate common meter to create extended alternating line lengths. Typically, Tess’s ‘innate love of melody’ is inherited from ‘her ballad-singing mother’, again indicating the oral transmission of these abstracted patterns to which narratives and melodies are fitted.⁶¹² So characteristic is the ballad style of Hardy, that according to Gunn his poems give the reader ‘ballad expectations’ and lead her/him to anticipate not only patterns, but even parts of the narrative; ballads have a distinctive set of expectancy patterns, narratively as well as formally.⁶¹³ Deceptively simple, ballads are usually enigmatic rather than revelatory: Gunn notes how central omission is to the form, that ‘we get a paring-down to essentials, and the greater the paring the wider and richer the implications’.⁶¹⁴ Again, the emphasis is on what is absent, on what is heard only by the imagination.

Gunn builds on the earlier scholarship of Norman Arkans, who traces Hardy’s inheritance of Wordsworthian ballads, and in particular how ‘the term after Wordsworth promised an emphasis on narrative’.⁶¹⁵ Arkans is largely concerned with how poems have previously been classified, but highlights (unlike other critics) ‘the force of the ballad impulse in Hardy’.⁶¹⁶ As suggested above, Arkans sees ‘a large proportion’ of Hardy’s poems ‘derive from a primal ballad impulse of telling a

⁶¹⁰ ‘The Bride-Night Fire’ from *Wessex Poems* has to footnote translations of individual words, since dialect is used so heavily. Taylor cites ‘The Bride-Night Fire’ as Hardy’s most intensely dialectical poem, and as an example of a direction he might have taken in the 1860s under the influence of Barnes’ (*Hardy’s Literary Language*, pp.163-64). Hardy leaves this mode behind but (like ‘The Bride-Night Fire’’)s epigraph ‘(A Wessex Tradition)’ often notes the provenance of his stories, such as ‘A Mediaeval Legend’ for ‘The Lost Pyx’ (p. 173) and ‘(The following lines are partly original, partly remembered from a Wessex folk-rhyme)’ for ‘The Colour’ (p. 693).

⁶¹¹ Thom Gunn, ‘Hardy and the Ballads’, p. 22.

⁶¹² Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, ed. by Tim Dolin (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 84.

⁶¹³ Thom Gunn, ‘Hardy and the Ballads’, p. 22.

⁶¹⁴ Thom Gunn, ‘Hardy and the Ballads’, p. 26.

⁶¹⁵ Norman Arkans, ‘Hardy’s Narrative Muse and the Ballad Connection’, in *Thomas Hardy Annual*, 2, ed. by Norman Page (London; Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984), pp. 131-56 (p. 151).

⁶¹⁶ Arkans, ‘Hardy’s Narrative Muse’, p. 132.

story'.⁶¹⁷ Having established (via Langbaum) that the *Lyrical Ballads* saw a conjunction of 'the traditional objectivity of the authentic ballads, and the narrative subjectivity of the new ballads', Arkans sees Hardy's development within ballads as further towards narrative and in 'the web of emotion in the speaker'.⁶¹⁸ Arkans' distinction, though, even for Wordsworthian ballads, relies on a category of 'authentic ballads' which seemingly exist outside of documented culture. Leaning towards incantation and ritual, ballads invite too easy a belief in the natural: Frost's simile does little to distance ballads from being literally found 'in the nest holes of hollow trees' (*CPRF* 171). To write within the ballad tradition, then, is to cultivate a sound so culturally ingrained that it seems to be extra-cultural, when in fact it is thoroughly contingent and fashioned after the economical use of human cognitive faculties (as Rubin's study demonstrates).⁶¹⁹

The combination of regional tones and ballad form affords Hardy and Frost a mnemonic specificity, where local sounds that last are nurtured by the ballad form. It is a genre that asks the reader to hear, not just because ballads were originally spoken/sung live, but because, as Arkans notes, 'ballad narrative left room for the performer to supply voice, emphasis, intonation, gesture': the ballad is incomplete without the reader who is 'soon entangled in the conflict between the so-called impersonality of the ballad and the personality of the speaking voice, the one having a story to tell, and the other having to tell a story'.⁶²⁰ Reading revivifies this supposed past tradition. Hughes proposes that 'Hardy's socio-historical dislocation emerges clearly in his use of balladic modes', his 'historical predicament [of being] caught in between two cultures': ballads in particular position Hardy as a figure resolutely holding on to something passing out of contemporary culture.⁶²¹ This marriage of a well-known and memorable form, with slightly archaic and local language has undoubtedly worked in both poets' favour in terms of their popularity.

⁶¹⁷Arkans, 'Hardy's Narrative Muse', p. 132.

⁶¹⁸Arkans, 'Hardy's Narrative Muse', p. 144; p. 150. Arkans never makes explicit what he means by 'authentic ballads', but these seem to align with those circulating in local communities documented only by such ballad-collectors as Francis James Child. They are certainly not the popular ballads or music hall ballads Arkans further delineates. 'New ballads' seem a type of 'literary ballad': a written version of an oral tradition which was increasingly leaning on narrative and dramatic impulses that would lead, in one direction, to the dramatic monologue.

⁶¹⁹See his chapter on 'North Carolina Ballads' (pp. 257-298), for instance, which takes part of Frost's 'Introduction to Ballads Migrant in New England' as its epigraph.

⁶²⁰Arkans, 'Hardy's Narrative Muse', pp. 151-52.

⁶²¹Hughes, *Ecstatic Sound*, p. 160.

As the last stanza of Hardy's famous ballad 'In Time of "The Breaking of Nations"' establishes:

Yonder a maid and her wight
Come whispering by:
War's annals will cloud into night
Ere their story die. 543

These traditional tales last through the ages, particularly since all flirtations with ballad form retain 'vestiges of its initial utility': the pared-down tale, able to be handed on to subsequent generations.⁶²² Hardy's balladic gestures were generally well received by his public and his 'contemporary readers seemed to hear in Hardy's verse something we have not heard to the same extent: the presence of ancestral voices descended from more primitive, bardic voices spinning yarns, singing tales, weaving stories'.⁶²³ The 'voice' found in ballads in which speaks best to, or is best heard by, a culture which still feels its oral lineage. However, even this tradition was passing out of current usage and into memory: Arkans notes Ian Gregor's observation that 'Hardy could not think of the "ballad world" without thinking of its demise, and the songs which once celebrated a culture by their very attachment to it became to Hardy a memorial, funereal in their symbolic reflection of continuity and stability'.⁶²⁴ In a more positive assessment, Greiner states 'Frost turns to accepted habits of speech as the basis for his poetry. Using understatement and casual syntax, he rescues an entire people from obscurity by capturing their folk-speech'.⁶²⁵ Like dialect, like sound itself, ballads too were passing out of a culture which defined itself primarily in terms of the textual, rather than the oral and both Hardy and Frost used their verse to keep the form not just remembered, but still transmitting memories.

'Talk like drama': Dramatic voices

⁶²²Arkans, 'Hardy's Narrative Muse', p. 142.

⁶²³Arkans, 'Hardy's Narrative Muse', p. 134.

⁶²⁴Arkans, 'Hardy's Narrative Muse', p. 135. Matthew Campbell cites 'In Time of "The Breaking of Nations"' when he discusses the possibility of Hardy's 'seeing the continuity of the cultural tradition in which he has worked coming to a final breach' (*Rhythm and Will*, p. 238).

⁶²⁵Donald J. Greiner, *Robert Frost: The Poet and His Critics* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1974), p. 99. Greiner is here commenting on Van Doren's comparison between Frost and Robert Burns.

‘Writing is unboring to the extent that it is dramatic’
– Frost, ‘On Emerson’⁶²⁶

Frost famously claimed in the Preface to *A Way Out* (1929) that ‘A dramatic necessity goes deep into the nature of the sentence’ (*CPRF* 99). Even phatic expressions or the most casual remarks could convey tension through their positioning and subsequent emphasis – said ‘by whom, where and when is the question’, returning to Frost’s idea that ‘all writers are artists in context’. Reiterating his ideas of orality and the sound of sense, this preface asserts the dominance of the dramatic for verse:

A dramatic necessity goes deep into the nature of the sentence. Sentences are not different enough to hold the attention unless they are dramatic. No ingenuity of varying structure will do. All that can save them is the speaking tone of voice somehow entangled in the words and fastened to the page for the ear of the imagination. That is all that can save poetry from sing-song, all that can save prose from itself.

I have always come as near the dramatic as I could this side of actually writing a play. *CPRF* 99

This ‘drama’ of the spoken (above and beyond the drama of formal constraint) is what gives poetry its frisson.⁶²⁷ Here, Frost looks for poetry to be striking, rather than regular and anticipated: an alternative model of how memorability might be achieved. Here again, Frost is seen debating the issues of expectation within poetry, since ‘sing-song’ is something from which poetry needs to be ‘saved’.⁶²⁸ The drama of versification’s tussle is present in ‘entangled’ and ‘fastened’, remembering the ‘strained relation’ between metre and intonation from Chapter 1, where Frost aims to ‘drag and break the intonation across the metre as waves first comb and then break stumbling on the shingle’ (*CPPP* 680). Both Hardy and Frost, of course, wrote actual plays, but here I am interested in how they cultivate dramatic voices in individual poems ‘this side of actually writing a play,’ in Frost’s formulation.⁶²⁹

⁶²⁶*CPRF*, p. 202.

⁶²⁷Regarding this quotation and this section’s epigraph, it is noticeable that Frost praises Amy Lowell in 1915 for its ‘dramatic tones’ (see *LRFI* 342).

⁶²⁸This is reminiscent of Frost’s criticism of Alfred Noyes from the rhyme section of Chapter 1.

⁶²⁹Beyond Frost’s two ‘Masques’ (*A Masque of Reason* and *A Masque of Mercy*) he wrote three plays: *A Way Out*, *In An Art Factory* and *The Guardeen*. Hardy famously wrote *The Dynasts* – his epic drama set in the Napoleonic Wars.

Following the theory outlined in the above preface through to poetic practice, it is little wonder that Frost favoured dramatic forms. As seen above, the ballad tradition could be used to create drama in the distance between tale and teller.⁶³⁰ However, the form with which Frost has become associated is the dramatic monologue, or variations on this form. One of his reasons for appreciating Edwin Arlington Robinson was that ‘Robinson could make lyric talk like drama’, and Frost was favourably compared with Robinson for evoking ‘the same quality of speech which is at once both artistic and the literal tone of human talk’.⁶³¹ This neatly outlines the balance appreciated between two contrasting elements. For all Frost’s protestations about speech, it is as this interacts with literary form that drama occurs. In the ‘Unpublished Preface to an Expanded *North of Boston* (1958?)’, Frost wrote that some of the poems ‘are a little nearer one act plays than eclogues’ (*CPRF* 196). Hardy, too, often set his poem up as individual dramatic acts, such as the fifteen satires of circumstance. The prefaces to his collections also insist that: ‘the pieces are in a large degree dramatic or personative in conception; and this even where they are not obviously so’ (to *Wessex Poems*, 6); ‘of the subject-matter of this volume [*Poems of the Past and the Present*] – even that which is in other than narrative form – much is dramatic or impersonative even where not explicitly so’ (84); the poems of *Time’s Laughingstocks* ‘are to be regarded, in the main, as dramatic monologues by different characters’ (190). Hardy will often introduce the reader to a character – Lizbie Brown, Tess, Jenny – and have her/him either speak or be spoken about. Either way, the reader takes on the role of eavesdropper, if not interlocutor, comprehending via conversation.

The discussion of eye and ear readers above demonstrated Frost’s investment in everyday, casual uses of language as a medium of social interaction. There is an implied gap between speech and poetry, one which might be bridged by the adoption of genre traits – namely, the dramatic monologue. This form, famously deployed by Robert Browning (a major influence on both Hardy and Frost) makes the offhand, improvised nature of the spoken mode into something informed by literary tradition (and thus more palatable perhaps to critics). Frost indulges the taste

⁶³⁰On this development in balladry, see Stephen Parrish, ‘The Ballad as Drama: II’ in *The Art of the Lyrical Ballads* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp. 123-128.

⁶³¹*CPRF*, p. 120. The second quotation comes from Frost’s interview with William Stanley Braithwaite, ‘Robert Frost, New American Poet’, originally published in the *Boston Evening Transcript*, May 8, 1915 (qtd. in *Robert Frost on Writing*, p. 150.)

for drama particularly in his second collection, *North of Boston* with its various leanings towards the dramatic monologue. These poems purposely stage their speakers' sentences, which are made all the more dramatic by the introduction of line breaks and incidental play with metre.⁶³² The 'metrical beat of the verse' is a sought-out undercurrent, wanted 'as something for the rhythm of the vocal tones to play across, to make a figure in, to make a posture in' (*CPRF* 138). Metrical verse, then, is a site of juxtaposition, a dramatic meeting between unlikely elements. Frost becomes an observer, interested in what will be 'made' by this collision.

North of Boston engages with the dramatic monologue, but rarely do the poems completely conform to the genre. 'A Servant to Servants' sees its harried speaker simply begin, and speak out the entire poem, but more often a situation is outlined, and two speakers converse.⁶³³ It is not simply that these people speak that gives the verse its quality, it is Frost's ability to reveal how everyday diction can convey fear, threat, concern – speech's hidden emotional qualities. The 'don'ts' of 'Home Burial' are probably the most famous example of this, but even Doctor Magoon's 'Don't touch me, please – I say, don't touch me, please' ('A Hundred Collars', *CPPP* 52) demonstrates how repeated pedestrian monosyllables, punctuation and iambic pentameter interact to reveal tone. Frost himself wrote of 'Home Burial's' 'don't's, that 'they gain something from the way they are placed in the verse' (*LRF1* 210). By writing conversations, both poets also engage with the social functions of language, and so add to the drama of versification the politics of politeness strategies and the pragmatics of utterance. This is both familiar to the reader and yet made newly important, as conversation is formalised on the page. These poems use their form to be memorable as 'worthy of remembrance or note', rather than 'easy to remember', as identified in the introduction.

The way people talk is fundamental to their character, a vocal fingerprint; Wesling refers to voice as 'This undulation of air, whose speechprint is so personal

⁶³²The relationship between the sentence and the line is one of particular crafting for Frost. He praises John Erskine because 'You never fail to get something out of the relation of sentence to line' (*LRF2*, p. 175), and also his son Carol's forays into poetry for 'the way you vary the length and shape of the sentences in the lines and overlapping the lines to save yourself from monotony' (qtd. in *Robert Frost on Writing*, p. 108).

⁶³³For instance, 'A Hundred Collars', 'Home Burial', 'The Death of the Hired Man', 'The Generations of Men' and 'The Code'.

that we have not been able to build machines to recognize it'.⁶³⁴ Hardy and Frost nurse these fragile traces of identity into versed material. In Frost's 'The Black Cottage', the extended monologue from the vicar seems a fitting tribute to a woman who 'liked to talk [...] and had her story'; indeed, Pritchard details how Frost revised the poem to make it a spoken memory.⁶³⁵ The minister's speech remembers 'her' ways of speaking: 'One wasn't long in learning what she thought' conjures a loquacious individual. From the minister's account, her words centred on the Civil War:

'She always, when she talked about the war,
Sooner or later came and leaned, half knelt
Against the lounge beside [the portrait]' CPPP 59

This gives not just what she rehearsed in speech, but the actions that accompanied it; her words include the ghosts of physical habits. The tone of the poem, while colloquial and casual, has a reverence for the old woman's routine. The vicar's winding speech leaves the reader always with a sense of unease, even though this poem (unlike many in *North of Boston*) has no particular dark secret to reveal. Conversation is risky, because one never knows what will be said next and where that will lead. That the vicar's last sentence is 'There are bees in this wall' is unsettling because it is unpredictable.⁶³⁶

In his landmark work on the subject, Robert Langbaum notes that 'arguments cannot make the case in the dramatic monologue but only passion, power, strength of will and intellect, just those existential virtues which are independent of logical and moral correctness'.⁶³⁷ To phrase this more in line with ideas of conversation, *how* something is said governs more in this genre than

⁶³⁴Donald Wesling, 'Difficulties of the Bardic', p. 69. Wesling wrote this in 1981, but even today's most advanced voice recognition software requires hours of training to a given individual's voice, and then still struggles with the prosodic features of speech.

⁶³⁵CPPP, p. 60. Pritchard reveals that the original 'Derry version' of 'The Black Cottage' (complete with 'rhymed stanzas') was unsuccessful with editors and only in the reimagined version is the woman 'a memory in the mind of the character who tells her story' (*Literary Life*, pp. 93-94). Pritchard claims 'Frost hit upon the good idea of putting another character into the poem [...] content to listen to the minister' (p. 94). The new character, like the reader, is a listener.

⁶³⁶CPPP, p. 62. Hardy also displays a knack for using the ending of a poem to upset or unsettle the reader. While 'The Three Tall Men' is already uncanny, being about a man making his own coffin to ensure it fits him, but the anxiously wrought progress of the narrative is undercut by the final couplet: "Many years later was brought to me | News that the man had died at sea" (p. 854).

⁶³⁷Robert Langbaum, *The Poetry of Experience: The Dramatic Monologue in Modern Literary Tradition*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1957), p. 81.

precisely *what* is said. Much as the introduction to this chapter asserts, a dramatic monologue seeks ‘to establish the speaker’s existence, not his moral worth but his sheer existence, as the one incontrovertible fact upon which the poem can rest’.⁶³⁸ Intricate and sophisticated as these versifications and characterisations are, they return the reader to the primacy of sound and one of its basic functions: to assert presence. In this use of the genre, then, character and circumstance can be foregrounded to offer the reader new formulations of expectancy: given the murderous qualities of some of Browning’s famous speakers, when Doctor Magoon rooms with Lafe (in ‘A Hundred Collars’), the reader’s tension is culturally ingrained, as well as fostered line by line. A particular variation of expectancy, the dramatic monologue genre fosters specific expectations.

According to Langbaum, ‘The Chapel-Organist’ (which hears a promiscuous woman recount losing her Church position and intending to poison herself) ‘comes closest to being a Browningsque dramatic monologue because of the speaker’s unusual perspective and fierce fidelity to her character’.⁶³⁹ Langbaum’s comparison holds beyond poetic content: Hardy ‘employs the hexameter line of varying syllables used in Browning’s “Abt Vogler”, the utterance of a male organist’.⁶⁴⁰ However, barring its Dickensian diction and the presence of convicts, Hardy’s ‘In the Servants’ Quarters’ is more akin to Frostian dramatic verse. Here a group gathers as a result of a crime, with a stranger suspected of being an accomplice. Though the constables keep laughing ‘Ha, ha!’, the poem is decidedly oppressed by noises. A visual resemblance already commented on, it is the stranger’s voice that gives him away:

‘O, come, come!’ laughed the constables. ‘Why, man, you speak the dialect
He [the criminal] uses in his answers; you can hear him up the stairs.
So own it. We sha’n’t hurt ye. There he’s speaking now! His syllables
Are those you sound yourself when you are talking unawares,
As this pretty girl declares.’

‘And you shudder when his chain clinks!’ 383

⁶³⁸Langbaum, *Poetry of Experience*, p. 197.

⁶³⁹Langbaum, *Thomas Hardy*, p. 54.

⁶⁴⁰Langbaum, *Thomas Hardy*, p. 54. See Griffiths, *Voice*, p. 219 for another comparison between Browning’s and Hardy’s dramatic monologues.

Unable to repose quietly, it is the stranger's voice that threatens to identify and incriminate him. The inclusion of 'There he's speaking now!' asks that the reader attend to a voice not present, as s/he feels her/himself to be similarly present in the servants' quarters. This stranger does seem somewhat of a restless spirit, his actions mirroring Old Hamlet's when the poem ends with 'the morning cock that moment crows, | And he droops, and turns, and goes'. Though split into stanzas rather than block pentameter, Hardy seems of a Frostian persuasion here, bringing disparate people together, whose agendas collide and whose voices perturb the reader.⁶⁴¹

Language heard and language read may be intertextually related; Browning and Shakespeare are both channelled through Frost's verse. 'I've heard them say, though, | They found a way to put a stop to it', in 'A Servant to Servants' (CPPP 68-69), remembers the madness of 'Porphyria's Lover' and the Duke to 'My Last Duchess'. The lover 'found a thing to do', the solution being murder, while the Duke 'gave commands, | Then all smiles stopped together.'⁶⁴² In his understated remaking, Frost keeps poem within poem, the literary precedent for insanity competing with this family's tradition. 'The Generations of Men', ends with the seemingly casual question "Where shall we meet again?", but when "In rain?" follows, suddenly the witches of *Macbeth* are heard (CPPP 81). Intertextuality is a kind of literary memory, where a passage is illuminated by the previous work, and old words are reinvigorated as the poems exchange conversation. It is also a matter of recognition, as words are (re)identified: Chapman notes the 'direct quotation from another writer [...] was a practice more acceptable to the Victorian reader, who would enjoy the recognition of the words, and respond to the feeling which had made the author choose them'.⁶⁴³ Though perhaps overreaching, Chapman makes explicit the recognition element of intertextuality for the Victorian reader. Verse intertextuality is a mediation between heard and read language, because the eye does not just recognise allusions, the ear registers rhythms. Browning's Duke is heard behind the Servant's adage, and the near-quotation from *Macbeth* recalls hearing the witches in a live performance of the play. Intertextuality offers words a double lease on life,

⁶⁴¹That Hardy revised the title of this poem from 'Humour in the servants' quarters' suggests that he recognised the potential for the humour to turn sinister.

⁶⁴²*Robert Browning: Poetical Works*, p. 400, p. 368. Faggen also notes the similarity between Frost and Browning in these particular poems (*Challenge*, p. 230).

⁶⁴³Chapman, *Language*, p. 55.

drawing upon the influence of their original context as well as their new residence; literature comments back on itself, hearing and reading its ancestors as it goes.⁶⁴⁴

In leaning on Browning's form (and, at times, his exact words), Frost invites the qualities of the dramatic monologue to influence his poetry.⁶⁴⁵ As Isobel Armstrong notes, a monologue provides 'hermeneutic shock created by the absence of dialogue'. Moreover, this absence exerts pressure on the reader, making her/him 'aware of his or her exclusion and simultaneously force that awareness into a consciousness of *reading*, understand the poem as the object of analysis and thus as ideology'.⁶⁴⁶ These voices return the reader to the act of reading with renewed attention.

Louis Untermeyer notes that Frost 'never "recited" his poems; he "said" them – sometimes, especially if they were new or short, he "said" them twice. "Would you like to hear me say that one again?" He would enquire'.⁶⁴⁷ Although Frost's metrical emphases suggest that in actuality he is somewhere between reciting and saying, recordings of his readings bear out this terminology: 'I'll say some short ones first before I take that long one [...] Shall I say that again? I like the way I rhyme that'.⁶⁴⁸ Most noticeably, though, Frost asks that the audience hear certain things: 'Watch my rhymes', he'll say and Bartlett notes that 'when R.F. read a poem a second time in a lecture [...] he did it because he felt that, somehow, the audience hadn't quite got the poem'.⁶⁴⁹ Frost explains to Sidney Cox that

I say you cant [*sic*] read a single good sentence with the salt in it unless you have previously heard it spoken. Neither can you with the help of all the characters and diacritical marks pronounce a single word unless you have previously heard it actually pronounced. Words exist in the mouth not in books. You can't fix them and you dont [*sic*] want to fix them. You want

⁶⁴⁴See Gosmann for a reading of the 'mnemonic purpose' of quotation in Susan Howe's poetry (*Poetic Memory*, p. 89).

⁶⁴⁵While I am aware that critics have followed Isobel Armstrong's lead in attending to the female tradition of writing dramatic monologues (particularly Felicia Hemans and Leticia Landon, see *Victorian Poetry*, pp. 311-18), I focus on Browning because of the direct influence which can be traced from Browning to both Hardy and Frost (see for instance 'Other Lives: Hardy and Browning' in James Richardson's *Poetry of Necessity*, pp. 31-74 and Thompson's reading of Frost and Browning in 'Dramatic Narratives', in *Fire and Ice*, pp. 106-19).

⁶⁴⁶Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, p. 145.

⁶⁴⁷Louis Untermeyer ed., *The Letters of Robert Frost to Louis Untermeyer* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1964), p. 5.

⁶⁴⁸Robert Frost, Harvard Advocate Reading, 13 March 1962 (recording held at Woodberry Poetry Room, Harvard University, MA).

⁶⁴⁹Robert Frost, Harvard Advocate Reading; John T. Bartlett, 'Notes made by John T. Bartlett after various conversations with Robert Frost, 1932-1937', MS 6261, Box 3, p. 10.

them to adapt their sounds to persons and places and times. You want them to change and be different. *LRF1* 168

This links to Frost's sound of sense (that poetry derives from the 'vernacular') and demonstrates Frost's disdain for quasi-musical attempts to notate poetry (or any such explanatory 'marks').⁶⁵⁰ The real marker of tonal emphasis is hearing speech.⁶⁵¹ The catalogue of aural experience in everyday conversation provides the basis for both the composing of and the reception of poetry. In Frost's England notebook, he wonders 'how may words be made to hold their sounds. [...] Sentences only hold their sounds for those who have heard them. The real intonations of Homer's verse are long since lost. That is why we chop into scansion'.⁶⁵² Like the 'diacritical marks' above, here 'scansion' indicates a failure of hearing. Sound is only 'held' when heard, hence Hardy's and Frost's repeated attempts to pen sound.

The 'natural' conversations in Frost's poetry, though, leave Yvor Winters unimpressed, since

Poetry is not conversation, and I see no reason why poetry should be called upon to imitate conversation. Conversation is the most careless and formless of human utterance; it is spontaneous and unrevised, and its vocabulary is commonly limited. Poetry is the most difficult form of human utterance⁶⁵³

⁶⁵⁰In an essay of c.1941, Frost notes that

Poets have lamented the lack in poetry of any such notation as music has for suggesting sound. But it is there and always has been there. The sentence is the notation. The sentence is before all else just that: a notation for suggesting significant tones of voice. With the sentence that doesn't suggest significant tones of voice, poetry has no concern whatever. *CPRF* 137

Richardson's notes to this passage explain Frost's reading of 'Sidney Lanier's Science of English Verse, which draws heavily on both Spencer and Darwin in discussions of voice' (*CPRF*, p. 303). Among the Frost papers at Harvard, there is a fragment on which, having written out a copy of his 'My November Guest', Frost tries to write out a line of Shelley's 'To the moon' with musical rhythmic values above it. It is bizarre to look at a line of verse with minims, crotchets and quavers above it. These serve to show the relative lengths allotted each word, but without a time signature and a full musical score, indicative lengths is all these can be. In a notebook entry c.1913, Frost writes 'On Seeing Shakespeare's Rythm [*sic*] Done in Musical Notation by Harriet. – All I can say is it's a damned poor tune' (MS 1178, Notebook c.1913-1917, fol. 5^r; this refers to Harriet Monroe's 'Rhythm of English Verse' articles in *Poetry* magazine, 1913).

⁶⁵¹The letter quoted above shares concerns, and exact phrases, with one to Cox in September 1914, where Frost asks 'Who wants to fix the present sounds of words?' (*LRF1*, p. 221).

⁶⁵²MS 6261, Notebook 1912-1915, fol. 37^r.

⁶⁵³Yvor Winters, 'Robert Frost: or, the Spiritual Drifter as Poet', in *Robert Frost: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. James M. Cox (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1962), pp. 58-82 (p. 59).

Winters elides the informal and the formless, missing the form which casual utterance takes, which may be impulsive but is not shapeless.⁶⁵⁴ The spontaneity of spoken language makes it convincing; overheard conversations offer a privileged intimacy. What Winters does highlight, though, is that in a traditional hierarchy of poetic language, conversation is seen as too lowly for aesthetic value.⁶⁵⁵ Similarly, Hardy responds to his publisher's supposed correction by clarifying that 'the use of "he" & "it" indifferently for a star was intended to represent the carelessness of common parlance' (1.20). Like Winters, Hardy speaks of 'carelessness' but for him it is a virtue of authentic representation. The normality of such diction might seem to make it less memorable, as it undermines the specificity rule. However, such language chimes much more closely with real-life experience and allows the reader to substitute her/himself into the position of listener more easily. The dramatic poems, and the dramatic elements, of Hardy and Frost are hard, perhaps, to commit to memory, but they are distinctively *memorable*, emblazoning as they do unusual character voices onto the reader's mind.

Make it heard

'The written word is the choicest of relics. It is something at once more intimate with us and more universal than any other work of art. It is the work of art nearest to life itself. It may be translated into every language, and not only be read but actually breathed from all human lips; – [...] to be carved out of the breath of life itself.'
– Henry David Thoreau⁶⁵⁶

Poetry, because it is written for both eye and ear, can be read silently or aloud, always has the ghost of the spoken voice behind it: the fiction of utterance attends on verse. As Thoreau expresses above, words apply both to the 'universal', they are spoken by all, and to the 'intimate with us', our own bodies produce them. It is this proximity to physiological process on which Thoreau reflects, that words can 'not only be read but actually breathed from all human lips', can be relocated from page

⁶⁵⁴Interestingly, one of Bridges' claims against free verse is that it implies the possibility of the 'absence of all form' and 'formlessness can have no place in Art' (p. 648).

⁶⁵⁵Frost betrays knowledge of such a hierarchy when he boasts to Cox that with North of Boston, 'I dropped to an everyday level of diction that even Wordsworth kept above' (*LRF1* p. 132, emphasis mine): he has purposely lowered his language, at least by literary standards.

⁶⁵⁶*Walden*, ed. by Stephen Fender (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 94.

to person.⁶⁵⁷ He covertly resurrects the primacy of speech from the ‘relics’, the remnants of the written. Thoreau’s definition might be narrowed to encompass only poetry, because only poems live visual, aural and oral lives; Frost’s poems were, and are, regularly performed. Poetry is words invested with breath; actual respiration produces spoken poetry and the spectre of breath threads through the lines on the page. A verse memory is made of this transient, nearly intangible, but vital substance.

Thoreau brings the reader back to the breath; Frost would aptly agree with this, but his own formulation always has the voice indicating a physical presence standing just beyond the page: ‘You must remember that no sentence is quite on the page any way. The sentence concept that holds the words together is supplied by the voice’.⁶⁵⁸ Frost’s sentences, and their attendant sounds, require the presence of the reader – just as a musical score cannot sound until the singer interacts with it, the page is a prompt to the poem. Serendipitously echoing Frost, Wesling notes that ‘Silent reading must *supply the voice* on the basis of what is known about speaking and about the style in writing’.⁶⁵⁹ This though emphasises long-term cultural memory when one of the crucial aspects of supplying voice is that it happens in the present, coloured by the short-term memory of previous sentences.

In order for poetry to work, for reading to work, something external to the text must be ‘supplied’: voice invites and involves the reader. As Griffiths determines,

Print does not give conclusive evidence of a voice; this raises doubts about what we hear in writing but it also gives an essential pleasure of reading, for as we meet the demand a text makes on us for our voices, we are engaged in an activity of imagination which is delicately and thoroughly reciprocal.⁶⁶⁰

Like Frost’s ‘imagining ear’ in the act of composition, there is ‘an activity of imagination’ in the act of reading a voice. Griffiths sees that the ‘pleasure’ lies in

⁶⁵⁷Frost’s love of Thoreau and especially *Walden* can be seen in his picking it as one of his ten books for his contribution to *Books We Like* (1936), claiming Thoreau comes ‘near the height of poetry’ (*CPRF*, p. 123), and when he writes to Wade Van Dore that ‘I like [Thoreau] as well as you do. In one book (*Walden*) he surpasses everything we have had in America’ (*LRF2*, p. 257). Frost’s poems ‘Ghost House’ and ‘Directive’ are also among those in dialogue with *Walden*’s imagery.

⁶⁵⁸MS 1178, Notebook c.1913-1917, fol. 7^r.

⁶⁵⁹Wesling, ‘Difficulties of the Bardic’, p. 71 (original emphasis).

⁶⁶⁰Griffiths, *Printed Voice*, p. 13.

having ‘doubts’ rather than certainties, like Chapter 2’s cultivated indeterminacies.⁶⁶¹ While Frostian voices may inspire such ‘doubts’, Hardy writes these caveats into his poems: they ‘may say’ (‘Afterwards’); it could be her voice or ‘just the wind’ (‘The Voice’). By the time the reader has begun to doubt, though, s/he is already listening, already hearing what may never have been there.

In adopting speech, Hardy and Frost make their poems heard and overheard – the reader is in attendance at a voiced event. This links to memory’s function in bearing witness, that the reader is made to participate in something s/he did not witness and – as far as is possible – to be present at it.⁶⁶² From presence to the present tense, successful memory is about harnessing the present, or harnessing the present for the past’s use.⁶⁶³ Foregrounding the voice, therefore, makes sense, since voice makes something more present and perhaps cues a real-time event (or simulates a real-time event) more obviously.

Sound memories have particular emotional values, and more recent responses to memory have looked at ‘earwitnessing’ instead of eyewitnessing.⁶⁶⁴ In studying memories of the Nazi period, Carolyn Birdsall notes that

In contrast to visual memories, sound tends toward an indexical relationship to remembering. In other words, rather than fix a determined linear narrative or image, sound can be drawn upon to prompt certain moods or feelings. The value of examining sound memories is that they can encompass both individual and group uses of sound for creating a sense of the past.⁶⁶⁵

It is this ‘indexical relationship’ that this chapter has sought to uncover in the poetry of Hardy and Frost, where the markings on the page are merely the beginning, the

⁶⁶¹Wesling, too, notes that ‘Hunting that distinctive voice [...] can be a great pleasure’ and that it might be more rewarding if ‘the voice and the internal relations of the text can be delayed in their recognition’ (‘Difficulties of the Bardic’, p. 71). Here, Wesling is talking about being present at a live reading by the poet her/himself, but I see his insight as applicable to silent reading too.

⁶⁶²Wesling further notes about silent reading (as opposed to an oral reading) ‘Because writing is a sort of conversation with the self which dispenses with other physical selves, the written enunciation is the mark of an absence – absence of the other’ (‘Difficulties of the Bardic’, p. 71).

⁶⁶³I purposely formulate it thus (rather than the more expected ‘harnessing the past for the present’s use’) because both Hardy and Frost appear to assert the dominance of the past over the present.

⁶⁶⁴This comes mainly from Schafer’s designation of the ‘earwitness’, as someone who can provide authenticity via their presence in a particular soundscape (see ‘Earwitness’ pp. 99-100 in R. Murray Schafer, ‘The Soundscape’, in *The Sound Studies Reader*, ed. by Jonathan Sterne (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 95-103).

⁶⁶⁵Carolyn Birdsall, ‘Earwitnessing: Sound Memories of the Nazi Period’, *Sound Souvenirs: Audio Technologies, Memory and Cultural Practices*, eds. by Karin Bijsterveld and Jose van Dijck, (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2009) pp. 169-81 (p. 172).

‘prompt’, of a much larger – much louder – memory experience.⁶⁶⁶ Birdsall places ‘value’ on the fact that sound can cross over between the individual and the group, and, extrapolating outwards, between cognition and culture. This interplay is partly set in motion by emotion: another essay from the same collection as Birdsall’s discussed the *Alle Namen* soundscape at the Netherlands American Cemetery and Memorial, in which hidden speakers played children reading the names of the dead. As Ruth Benschop writes ‘it appears that *Alle Namen*’s aim was to evoke an experience that awakened in people a feeling of connection to the past [...] not only names, but also voices were crucial for achieving this’.⁶⁶⁷ It is the capacity of sound to ‘evoke an experience’ which is its strongest mnemonic asset, as seen in Hardy’s and Frost’s use of the dramatic, ballad traditions and direct speech: the reader is meant to have an experience of not just listening, but hearing live. While these examples negotiate traumatic memory, the growing field of sound studies seeks to establish the whole gamut of ‘sound values’ that different cultures place on certain sounds.⁶⁶⁸ Mirroring Frost’s sound of sense, Dolar notes that ‘The written text and its sound value never match, yet they always form correspondences’.⁶⁶⁹ Voice in particular (due to its affective properties) can convey these ‘sound values’ which are separate from other culturally-inflected attachments and offer a more resonant experience of memory. Though radically subject to loss in terms of concrete detail, Hardy’s and Frost’s sound memories offer a potent experience of remembering, with their suggestive traces promoting reconstructive effort on the part of the reader.

Looking forward to Chapter 4, it is also important that – as psychologist David C. Rubin points out – as well as being ‘now’, sound is also social:

Because sound exists only when it is going out of existence and
because sound cannot be heard very far from the speaker, oral transmission

⁶⁶⁶Street, too, is particularly concerned with the ‘indexical’ possibilities of sound, particularly those linked to ‘the sound world of childhood’ and those induced by remembering the voice of a dead loved one (see *Memory*, pp. 3-4; pp. 74-79).

⁶⁶⁷Ruth Benschop, ‘All the Names: Soundscapes, Recording Technology, and the Historical Sensation’, *Sound Souvenirs: Audio Technologies, Memory and Cultural Practices*, eds. by Karin Bijsterveld and Jose van Dijck, (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2009) pp. 182-98 (p. 192).

⁶⁶⁸Michael Bull and Les Black, ‘Into Sound’, p. 1.

⁶⁶⁹Mladen Dolar, ‘Is There a Voice in the Text?’ in *Sound Effects: The Object Voice in Fiction*, eds. by Jorge Sacido-Romero and Sylvia Mieszkowski (Leiden; Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2015), pp. xi-xx (p. xiii). This comes from the preface to the volume, which focuses on fiction rather than poetry, and the cultivating of an authorial voice rather than individual characters, but the comparison is still a worthwhile one.

is social in a way that written transmission need not be. [...] if you listen to an epic, a ballad, or a counting-out rhyme in an oral tradition, you are in the presence of the singer and, except for a slight lag, what is on the singer's lips is in your ear. The contents of your short-term, or working, memory and the singer's are synchronized. In this technical sense, you and the singer are conscious of the same text at the same time.⁶⁷⁰

Rubin offers a more positive view of sound than the experiments testing the capacity of the auditory modality would allow, as seen earlier. In detailing the history of being anti-ear in the hierarchy of the senses, Schwartz notes that 'human hearing is constant, involuntary [...] the ear is a particularly vulnerable organ of perception: always in operation, unreflectively accumulative'.⁶⁷¹ These arguments, though, are ones based on perception: attacking the ear's lack of selectivity and inability to discriminate between stimuli. However, poetry reflects on carefully-chosen sounds: Hardy and Frost each ask the reader to listen to particular sounds which, enriched by memory, are amplified in the present. Hearing sound and, as I suggest here, reading sound is a process of making or modelling within real-time. While Pound and the modernists might have sought to make it new, voice can be – and is – used by Hardy and Frost, to make it now, make it heard and make it heard again.

By prioritising the ear, Hardy and Frost both appeal to the reader's memory and require its active input. Moreover, their interactions with not just oral culture, but dialect and vernacular specific to certain locales, allows their poetry to evoke place as well as time. Writing about 'acoustic communities', Truax notes that 'the community is linked and defined by sounds. To an outsider they may appear exotic or go unnoticed, but to the inhabitants they convey useful information about both individual and community life'.⁶⁷² Although Truax refers to the entire audioscape of a given place, rather than particular strands, the idea of an acoustic community bound together by sound provides a useful way of thinking about ballad culture.⁶⁷³

⁶⁷⁰Rubin, *Memory in Oral Traditions*, p. 66.

⁶⁷¹Hillel Schwarz, 'The Indefensible Ear: A History,' in *The Auditory Culture Reader*, eds. Michael Bull and Les Black, *Sensory Formation Series* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2003), pp. 487-501 (p. 487).

⁶⁷²Truax, *Acoustic Communication*, p.58.

⁶⁷³For a study of how particular sounds 'anchor localism' (in this case bells in the nineteenth century French countryside) see Corbin's 'The Auditory Markers of the Village' in *The Auditory Culture Reader*, eds. by Michael Bull and Les Black (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2003), pp. 117-125. For an account of the Victorian soundscape (with an emphasis on the noises brought by technological advancement) in the fiction of Dickens and Eliot, see John M. Picker's *Victorian Soundscapes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Ballads provide links between generations, in part because they are rooted in shared language and traditions. Hardy and Frost do offer some of the most ‘exotic’ aspects of local speech, but are (as Chapter 2 highlighted) particularly keen to lend an ear to those voices which were – due to societal changes and the nature of auditory memory – otherwise destined to ‘go unnoticed’. Truax also highlights the interaction between the individual and the community (a concern of Chapter 4).

Deep into Frost’s England Notebook, debating the necessity of having heard sounds spoken in order to read them, he concludes ‘the best part of a language must soon die’.⁶⁷⁴ While I accept that ‘Books cant [*sic*] arrest [words] change’ since ‘Sentences exist in the mouth’, I would argue that both Frost and Hardy became very practised at designating the poem as a space of speech.⁶⁷⁵ Pages later, Frost asks himself to consider ‘How the sentence sounds are caught and held fast – How long will they stay on paper’.⁶⁷⁶ The answer for Hardy and Frost was by creating poetic stimuli, and thereby those sounds would be able to re-sound for every future reader.

⁶⁷⁴MS 6261, Notebook 1912-1915, fol. 37^v.

⁶⁷⁵MS 6261, Notebook 1912-1915, fol. 39^v.

⁶⁷⁶MS 6261, Notebook 1912-1915, fol. 41^v.

CHAPTER 4 –

Remembering a Self: Memory for Posthumous Identity

‘Remember me’

– Hamlet, Act I scene v, lines marked in Hardy’s copy⁶⁷⁷

What do Old Hamlet’s parting words signify? ‘Remember me’ is an injunction which raises two sets of issues: the different significations of ‘me’ (and how such a ‘me’ or ‘I’ might be remembered), and that individual identity (however influenced by social markers) has epistemological implications. These are the issues that this chapter, too, explores with particular focus on Hardy’s and Frost’s poetic explorations of what is sometimes called person memory,⁶⁷⁸ and what I term ‘memory for identity’. It also looks at the ways in which their poems resonate or clash with psychological theorisations of identity. Furthering the debates of Chapter 3, those aspects of identity indicated by voice are highlighted, as well as how ‘our talk to-day’ (*CPRF* 100) reinvigorates the identity of those dead.

Hamlet shows that memory for identity is a question of epistemology – how does memory help one to know other people, or frustrate this knowledge? One conception of identity is the sum total of things that can be known about a person, but since this equation will contain different elements for each perceiving individual, the resulting identity varies. The title of this chapter highlights one of the major schisms within the notion of identity: there is not a single, stable entity, but only ‘a self’, provisional and responding to a particular context. Hardy and Frost concern themselves particularly with remembered identity after death, hence ‘posthumous identity’. Both writers focus on what survives (or is perpetuated) about an individual’s identity once they are no longer present to direct it, once there is only the memory of identity. Hardy and Frost engage with such a particular vein of identity that I side-step some of the more obvious debates on the subject: the fracturing of the self which comes with modernity, and Hardy’s and Frost’s

⁶⁷⁷Dennis Taylor, ‘Hardy’s copy of Hamlet’, *The Thomas Hardy Journal*. 20.3 (2004): 87-112 (p. 95).

⁶⁷⁸See Reid Hastie, Thomas M. Obstrom, Ebbe B. Ebbesen, Robert S. Wyer, Jr., David L. Hamilton and Donal E. Carlston, eds., *Person Memory: The Cognitive Basis of Social Perception* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1980).

respective biographical identities, self-willed or otherwise.⁶⁷⁹ This chapter studies Hardy and Frost as two poets who delve thoroughly into the possibilities of memory rather than falling back on the traditional literary response to death, the elegy. Instead, the dramatic monologue and the poem as a vehicle for voice take precedence. Building on Chapter 3, voice is here revealed as Hardy's and Frost's preferred way to perpetuate identity, in large part because voice is distinctively individual.

The complexities of individual identity are here separated into (somewhat) distinct strands, allowing me to define my terms clearly. I am concerned with what an understanding of identity relies on – whether that be the cognitive shortcuts which create assumed knowledge about a 'self', or those narratives exchanged and embellished by local communities – in order to uncover how Hardy and Frost portray identity. The characters of these poems are often members of small, rural societies which retain certain oral traditions for the exchange of memories. Although both poets vie for a characteristically personal concept of identity, they recognise that in order for this to be, and remain, remembered, it requires the interaction of a social group. Even the seemingly individual category of autobiographical memory (discussed below) 'is always rooted in other people', as memories are shared, and rehearsed, with friends and family.⁶⁸⁰ More so than perhaps any other chapter, this acknowledges the tension between the individual and the collective.⁶⁸¹ I make no claims to dealing comprehensively with such a complex topic as identity, but nor do Hardy and Frost explore its every facet. This chapter, therefore, studies which features of an individual are privileged by cultural or cognitive memory systems (and sometimes both) in order to promote and perpetuate a sense of identity.

That which I know to be me is not the same as that which you know to be me. There is a doubleness to identity (even before the countless possible iterations

⁶⁷⁹On the former, see Robert Langbaum, *The Mysteries of Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977). With the latter, I mean the identity of the poet, rather than those identities or notions of identity to have read in the poems. Lawrence Thompson's three-volume biography of Frost notoriously cast him as something of a monster. Hardy is cast as a *dramatis persona* in Vere H. Collins' bizarre *Talks with Thomas Hardy at Max Gate*. As famous writers, both men were subject to much scrutiny – and conjecture – about their own identities; however, that is not my focus here.

⁶⁸⁰Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, p. 24.

⁶⁸¹I am aware that Peter J. Stanlis has written *Robert Frost: The Individual and Society* (Rockford, CT: Rockford College, 1973) and Lawrence Thompson devotes a chapter to 'The Individual and Society' (*Fire and Ice*, pp. 214-21), but these readings concern a political stance (such as Frost and the New Deal), which is not my interest here.

are considered), since it is both you and not you, the contained internal and projected external, the private and public, the individual and collective. In Hardy's and Frost's poetry, the already unstable concept of identity also becomes subject to memory, with its own priorities, distortions and limitations. Yet memory and identity are in large degree inseparable: Langbaum (via Hume and towards Wordsworth) determines 'memory above all will remain the creator, the artist-fabricator, of self'.⁶⁸² This highlights the role of fabrication in identity-construction: while aesthetically acceptable, fabrication creates the problem of validity, at least for psychology – what type of knowledge about an individual is one pursuing? The answer differs between psychology and poetry. Poetic memory, for all its problems, is an important creator and preserver of identity. As a form of artificial memory, poetic text preserves, yet poetry has the freedom to select unlikely features of the individual self which, while interesting, might otherwise pass into nothingness.

The Roman poet Horace (who influenced both Hardy and Frost) establishes poetry as the security against oblivion in his Ode 3.30:⁶⁸³

I have completed a monument more lasting than brass, and more sublime
than the regal elevation of pyramids, which neither the wasting shower, the
unavailing north wind, nor an innumerable succession of years, and the
flight of seasons, shall be able to demolish. I shall not wholly die⁶⁸⁴

I use this prose rendering since it is the English translation which Hardy himself read and 'extensively annotated'.⁶⁸⁵ For Horace, poetry affords one an indestructible physicality: his words project through time to attest to his existence long after his own death. Yet this idea of the 'monument', of something stable by which identity can be known, comes under criticism in Hardy's own poetry. Monuments might establish previous existence, but they reveal little (or nothing) about an individual's

⁶⁸²*Mysteries of the Self*, p. 27. Langbaum's text examines the fracturing sense of self as 'a theme in modern literature', as his subtitle has it. Reaching further than this chapter is able, he spans genres and nationalities in considering identity as a literary problem.

⁶⁸³Chapter 1 discussed Horace in relation to Hardy. For Frost's Horatian influences, see Helen Bacon 'Frost and the Ancient Muses' in *The Cambridge Companion to Robert Frost*, ed. by Robert Faggen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 75-100 and for 'the kinship between [Frost] and Horace' see Thompson, *Fire and Ice*, pp. 150-54. For a more recent consideration of Frost and Horace, see Michael West, 'Just How "Like Horace in the True Horatian Vein" Was Robert Frost?', *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics*, 22.1 (2014): 75-92.

⁶⁸⁴*The Works of Horace translated literally into English Prose*, trans. by Christopher Smart (1808), p. 215, in *Early American Imprints, Series II: Shaw-Shoemaker 1801-1819*, <www.readex.com>.

⁶⁸⁵Michael Millgate, 'Thomas Hardy's Library at Max Gate: Catalogue of an Attempted Reconstruction', <<http://hardy.library.utoronto.ca/>>.

character. As this chapter shows, Hardy dedicates himself to, if not preserving, then re-envisioning aspects of personality. Projecting forwards to a different model of remembrance, Roland Barthes' *Mourning Diary* (written after his mother's death) struggles precisely with this 'theme of the "monument"' as something durable and concrete; however, he tempers this to something more fluid, where 'the Monument is not *lasting*, not *eternal* (my doctrine is too profoundly *Everything passes*: tombs die too), it is an act, an action, an *activity* that *brings* recognition'.⁶⁸⁶ While a physical memorial can be 'completed' (in the sense of constructed), remembering is an activity which neither seeks nor achieves completion: in these poems, remembering is an engaging-again with a specific individual.

While this chapter embraces more than just poems-as-epitaphs, Hardy's thinking about the remembrance of the dead is inflected by Wordsworth's 'Essays Upon Epitaphs' which notes at the start that 'an Epitaph presupposes a Monument' and 'Almost all Nations have wished that certain external signs should point out the places where their dead are interred', in part from a desire 'to preserve their memory'.⁶⁸⁷ Wordsworth's moral debate poses the same kinds of question with which Hardy's poetry tussles and, as such, I refer to it here. Thus, this chapter has two further interests: the tension between the durable and the ephemeral, as well as a return to Chapter 2's focus on how to recognise someone by the traces left. Alongside these literary concerns is the brain's conceptualisation of the self, which, heavily influenced by culture, pre-frames the ways in which one is encouraged to think of identity.

Although splitting private and public identity is in large degree impossible, this chapter begins by following Hardy's and Frost's more obvious poetic concern with the individual as distinct from others and later opens out to consider the more collective aspects of identity. Here the question 'How does memory help us to know ourselves?' is seen to inform the answer to 'How does memory help one to know other people?', as well as how poetry is implicated in this. Poetic identity as explored here offers more an experience of a person than information about her/him. While identity might be readily equated with facts or data, and thus best suited by prose

⁶⁸⁶Trans. by Richard Howard (London: Notting Hill Editions, 2011), p. 133 (original emphasis).

⁶⁸⁷William Wordsworth, 'Essays Upon Epitaphs', in *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, Vol. 2, eds. by W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 49-96 (p. 49).

(particularly biographical forms), these poets seek to render a convincing snapshot of an individual by (re-)experiencing the significant aspects of her/his character.⁶⁸⁸

When poetry is the cultural material doing the remembering, the form of the genre provides a mediating identity of its own. This chapter reopens the study of voice to establish a highly personal understanding of individual identity, before asserting the mnemonic properties of conversation. It proceeds to review a psychological understanding of memory for identity in order to see how and why Hardy's and Frost's portrayals frustrate this. The use of conversation to frame a narrative helps position identity as a social category, reliant on interpersonal connections, ahead of my considering how communities might nurture a collective sense of identity.

Voicing identity: Remembered speech

'Can it be you that I hear?'
– Hardy, 'The Voice'⁶⁸⁹

As seen in Chapter 3, versifying voice is one way to preserve the memory of a particular identity. There is a cultural tendency to equate voice and the whole person, in being conditioned to see voice as 'reflecting the whole person [...] we detect the state and mood of a person by noting large or small differences in the voice'.⁶⁹⁰ This both links voice to identity, and suggests a similar 'indexical relationship' between voice and identity (or remembered identity, in the case of these poems) to that seen between sound and remembering in Chapter 3.⁶⁹¹ Hardy's *Poetical Matter* notebook seeds an idea for a spoken identity:

P.Town ch. yd. 'Remember us!' ... People buried there address me thus.
'We knew Weatherbury', &c – Jan 31, 1898 *PM* 22

⁶⁸⁸In terms of identity as equating with facts and data, it is notable that the nineteenth century was the first great phase of ID, circumscribing identity via such features as date of birth, address, height, eye colour. Individuating features became another way to incorporate a person into the 'big data' of society. See Edward Higgs's *Identifying the English: A History of Personal Identification, 1500 to the Present* (London: Continuum, 2011), chapters 7 and 8 (which cover Hardy's lifespan).

⁶⁸⁹*CP*, p. 346.

⁶⁹⁰Truax, *Acoustic Communication*, p. 29.

⁶⁹¹Truax outlines the idea of 'Voice and the Whole Person' (pp. 29-36).

More helpful than Old Hamlet's famous exhortation, these souls offer salient facts about themselves. It is noteworthy that Hardy details knowledge of the local area, as if this should grant the souls access to the memory of the passer-by: locality seems to be mnemonically binding. The churchyard is presented as a parade of personalities, rather than a passive array of stones. Hardy focuses on a churchyard, but on words said by ghosts rather than read from gravestones, putting Hardyean memory somewhat at odds with the Wordsworthian model in 'Essays Upon Epitaphs', since 'the scene of our contemplations' in those essays is similarly 'a Country Churchyard'.⁶⁹² For the souls of Hardy's note, though, the words of the epitaphs are not enough to offer ideas of identity. Two further entries from Hardy, also of 1898, make explicit the link between identity and memory, but this time as the dead living on in the memory of the living – their identity can be restored, if remembered.

The month following the Puddletown churchyard note, Hardy adds 'also: All things speak incessantly; will keep on addressing; cannot escape them' (*PM* 22). Rather than being the great silencer, death seems to be a noisy continuation. However, this requires the presence of a live observer, somebody to listen. This is borne out in an entry from November of the same year:

Man, in churchyard, or elsewhere, calls up spirits of local people, whom nobody else remembers. They might argue that the great are so continually called that they are always alive; but themselves only now & then. He might have said, 'I am a museum of dead men's souls.' When he relinquishes them they ask him to wake them up again.

PM 22

Noticeably, the concern is for 'local people', or ordinary people. These souls are contrasted with 'the great', or as they would be termed now, 'the famous'. As Hardy's poem 'The To-Be-Forgotten' notes, there are 'few whose memory none lets die, | But all men magnify'.⁶⁹³ This November entry alone displays one of the major laws underpinning memory: that which is rehearsed is better remembered. Frost's psychology notebook offers two observations which back up this idea: 'we recall but what we have once recalled' and 'memory nothing but gains by repetition'.⁶⁹⁴ Frost,

⁶⁹²Wordsworth, 'Essays Upon Epitaphs', p. 68.

⁶⁹³*CP*, p. 145. As James Gibson notes, 'The To-Be-Forgotten' formerly had '(In Stourcastle Churchyard)' below the title, making it another churchyard meditation on memory (*CP*, p. 144).

⁶⁹⁴MS 1178, Notebook c.1911, fol. 21^r, fol. 24^v.

too, acknowledges the importance of repetition and how recall encourages further, future recalls. ‘The great’ regain mnemonic ground by remaining in parlance (Hardy’s bitter alliteration – ‘so continually called [...] always alive’), but ordinary individuals must make a conscious bid to be remembered. The famous build on their mnemonic momentum earned in life, yet the note suggests that everyday people might deserve more than they get from memory: to be ‘relinquished’ is a severe casting-off.

Hardy also marks a difference in agency: while ‘the great’ are ‘called’, and need not catalyse their legacy, the locals are remembered by one man and have to ‘ask him to wake them up again’. In one model the rememberer is doing the work of memory, in the other it is (unusually) the remembered. This links to ‘Voices from Things Growing’ from Chapter 3, in which the dead again call out to be remembered. Taylor notes that several Hardy poems ‘might be considered speaking epitaphs, the speech of the buried dead’, though speech offers a richness of detail not matched by actual epitaphs.⁶⁹⁵ There is a peculiar emphasis on posthumous identity in Hardy’s work, although this needs to be purposely pursued if someone is to be remembered. This pursuit is one which, I argue, Hardy and Frost take particular care over, resurrecting the identity of several ordinary people in such poems as ‘Not Only I’ (Hardy) and ‘The Black Cottage’ (Frost).

Related to posthumous identity, both poets show particular concern over the forgetting of the dead. While this is more obvious in Hardy’s poetry (due to the sheer volumes of poems on this theme),⁶⁹⁶ Frost displays his own awareness of the living’s ignorance of the dead at the end of ‘Out, out –’ – when ‘since they | Were not the one dead, [they] turned to their affairs’ (*CPPP* 131) – and a rarely-quoted moment of ‘Home Burial’ which notices that

One is alone, and he dies more alone.
 Friends make pretense of following to the grave,
 But before one is in it, their minds are turned
 And making the best of their way back to life
 And living people, and things they understand. *CPPP* 58

⁶⁹⁵Dennis Taylor, *Hardy’s Metres*, p. 173. That said, Wordsworth claims that the ‘first requisite [...] in an epitaph is, that it should speak’ (‘Essays Upon Epitaphs’, p. 57).

⁶⁹⁶A far-from-exhaustive list would include ‘Ah, Why Are You Digging?’, ‘Places’, ‘The Death of Regret’ and ‘Regret Not Me’.

In both of these cases, physical ‘turning’ seems to equate with ‘turning one’s back on the dead’ metaphorically. As Kendall emphasises, ‘Turn, not turn back or return; they now have new preoccupations’.⁶⁹⁷ Frost, like Hardy, uses his poems to bid a return not to just the past, but specific past people, allotting them value in the present.

The unidentified ‘man’ of Hardy’s Puddletown note becomes a space for relics, a ‘museum of dead men’s souls’, but for all his anonymity and existing partly on behalf of others, he is a unique figure: he keeps those ‘whom nobody else remembers’. This brings back two Hardy poems: ‘Not Only I’ (further discussed below), which asserts a claim to that which ‘nobody else discerned outspread’, and ‘Places’. This latter poem (from ‘Poems of 1912-13’) shares the theme of ‘Not Only I’, bemoaning those character traits which are lost to oblivion. However, in ‘Places’, this happens on behalf of a specific individual, Emma. The speaker here remembers that which ‘nobody else’s mind calls back’ (353). In all three cases, the ability to be a pinnacle of remembering becomes the defining characteristic: ‘nobody else’ does these things, marking these memory-rich individuals out. Also noticeable is Hardy’s use of the verb ‘to call’, which seems to be peculiarly related to remembering. The notebook entry has the man ‘call up’ those who are not ‘continuously called’ and ‘Places’ explicitly ‘calls back’ past scenes. Before the advent of ‘recall’ as a known psychological phenomenon, Hardy uses ‘call’ as a verb of remembering, with noticeably vocal overtones.⁶⁹⁸

The residents of Puddletown churchyard speak out in the hope that their voices will be carried forwards to the living; that they will be discussed. Conversation is, as shown in Chapter 3, one way of remembering: ‘joint remembering’ as Edwards and Middleton put it, or ‘conversational remembering’ as they named a later paper.⁶⁹⁹ As they argue, ‘an important aspect of the ecology of everyday remembering is that it is frequently done in the context of interpersonal communication. Remembering both serves, and is integrally related to, adaptive

⁶⁹⁷Kendall, *The Art of Robert Frost*, p. 236.

⁶⁹⁸‘The Voice’, of course, opens ‘Woman much missed, how you call to me, call to me’: the vocalised memory of the speaker’s dead wife.

⁶⁹⁹David Middleton and Derek Edwards, ‘Conversational Remembering: A Social Psychological Approach’, in *Collective Remembering*, eds. by David Middleton and Derek Edwards (London; Newbury Park; New Delhi: Sage, 1990), pp. 23-45.

social functioning’.⁷⁰⁰ Using discourse analysis, Edwards and Middleton studied the use of conversational remembering in a group of people recalling the plot of the film *E.T.*. In the context of ‘joint recall, people influence each other’s remembering’, discussing the given subject until a ‘mnemonic consensus’ is reached.⁷⁰¹ Importantly, ‘joint remembering’ means coming to a decision as a group: this ‘consensus’ necessarily eliminates individual variations to select a coherent narrative, an issue germane to the latter part of this chapter.

Responding to Edwards and Middleton’s work, Ira E. Hyman, Jr. deduced a ‘conversational mode [...] a certain way of structuring remembering around information beyond the story – such as evaluations and metastory comments’.⁷⁰² Hyman tested subjects’ memory for short stories by Guy de Maupassant, particularly interested in ‘metastory’ features, or those things which subjects added to their discussion of the story from pre-existing knowledge frameworks. Similarly, Edwards and Middleton sought to study ‘not simply memory for text or discourse, but of remembering *as* discourse’.⁷⁰³ Cohen mirrors this dual quality of joint remembering, noting that ‘conversation is not just something *to be remembered*, but can also be used as a *means of remembering*. In everyday life remembering is not necessarily a solo performance’.⁷⁰⁴ Like the self – and, indeed, like poetry – conversation here offers both mnemonic material and a means of remembering.

Much of autobiographical memory is a reconstructive narrative (discussed below). Psychologists largely study how an individual reconstructs her/his own narrative, but more often than not in Hardy’s and Frost’s poetry, one sees someone else charged with delivering the identity of the absent person. This allows Hardy and Frost to document memory at one further remove and yet with increased importance: with the individual in question gone, memory is the only possible avenue for establishing her/his identity. Hardy’s ‘His Immortality’ is about a man living on through the memory of him. However, as the stanzas run on, the decades pass and while ‘as the seasons wore, | And still his soul continuously bore | A life in theirs’

⁷⁰⁰Derek Edwards and David Middleton, ‘Joint remembering: Constructing an account of shared experience through conversational discourse’, *Discourse Processes*, 9:4 (1986): pp. 423-459 (p. 424).

⁷⁰¹Edwards and Middleton, ‘Joint Remembering’, p. 429.

⁷⁰²‘Conversational Remembering: Story Recall with a Peer versus for an Experimenter’, *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 8 (1994), 49-66 (p. 63).

⁷⁰³Edwards and Middleton, ‘Joint Remembering’, p. 425 (original emphasis).

⁷⁰⁴ Gillian Cohen, *Memory in the Real World*, 2nd edn (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1990), p. 238 (original emphasis).

(143), this memory diminishes, until by the end of the poem the speaker alone remembers. Here, memory is considered ‘a life’ in itself: the responsibility of those remembering is weighty. Indeed, ‘we can be reminded *by* people as well as *of* people’; the discursive space which conversation creates is one in which memory can thrive.⁷⁰⁵ This reconstruction-through-discussion, though, requires a community which uses the sharing of stories to affirm its bonds. Inhabiting rural communities at the turn of the century, Hardy and Frost had the living memory – if not necessarily the actuality – of such societies.⁷⁰⁶ In the digital age, by contrast, it is perhaps more through imaginative memory that such close-knit verbal exchange can be (re)constructed at all.

Memory culture has evidently changed beyond anything that Hardy or Frost would recognise, not least in the introduction of digital memories. In one sense, there are innumerable, highly-specialised online communities thanks to global connectivity, but while these exchanges are recorded in a way that endures, they have to be accessed as archived data, separate from the individual and not retained in the way(s) that Hardy and Frost imagine. In her study of Facebook, Joanne Garde-Hansen notes the ‘allure’ of ‘drawing together in one place memory practices’ and the power afforded the individual in creating these ‘unique archives of personal memories’.⁷⁰⁷ Noticeably, though, digital memories (the preserved material) are visual or textual: photographs, archived messages, writing on ‘Walls’. In the shift to digital interfacing (rather than face-to-face conversation), the voice is somewhat lost.⁷⁰⁸ Even the comprehensive storage afforded by Facebook cannot express the complexities of individual identity: ‘when reading a user’s Wall [...] one is not able to understand the multiple contexts of the interwoven and often juxtaposed discussions unless one actually is the user or knows all aspects of their life extremely

⁷⁰⁵Edwards and Middleton, ‘Joint Remembering’, p. 455 (original emphasis).

⁷⁰⁶In Ray’s *Thomas Hardy Remembered* Hardy says, of Under the Greenwood Tree, ‘I can scarcely remember such choirs myself, but it is not so very long since they were general in the villages’ (p. 18) and in another interview offers ‘I have seen with my own eyes things that many people believe to have been extinct for centuries. For instance, the maypole was familiar to me in my childhood’ (p. 31).

⁷⁰⁷‘MyMemories?: Personal Digital Archive Fever and Facebook’, in *Save As... Digital Memories*, eds. by Joanne Garde-Hansen, Andrew Hoskins and Anna Reading (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) pp. 135-150 (p. 135; 147).

⁷⁰⁸‘Somewhat’ because while Facebook allows for the sending of voice recordings, textual communication tends to dominate.

well'.⁷⁰⁹ The digital generation still faces Hardy's and Frost's same problems of the precise epistemology of individual identity.

Frost depicts identity as reconstructed through spoken narratives in 'The Black Cottage', though he highlights the possibility of remembering badly, depending on the teller. As seen in the preceding chapter, the story of 'The Black Cottage' is channelled through the dominant temperament of the minister. The characters present are 'the minister and I' (loquacious neighbour and silent interlocutor) but the focus is, supposedly, on the absent 'she' (the cottage's former inhabitant). While 'she had her own idea of things, the old lady', the identity the poem offers is filtered through the minister's perception. Indeed, in framing the narrative, Frost begins the poem with the minister literally setting the scene:

We paused, the Minister and I, to look.
He made as if to hold it at arm's length
Or put the leaves aside that framed it in. *CPPP 59*

The minister's framing makes for a coherent and measured narrative, but simultaneously ensures that 'she' (of unknown name) remains forever at 'arm's length'. There is an awkward double meaning to the minister's kindly meant "'Come in. No one will care'" (*CPPP 59*). Similarly, 'Old Davis' shows the speaker of 'A Fountain, a Bottle, a Donkey's Ears and Some Books' a derelict house, inviting him in via a broken window.⁷¹⁰ The vocal narrative is clear from "'I want to introduce you to the people | Who used to live here'" (*CPPP 199*), but this introduction takes place after their deaths, thus their identities can only be construed from the traces left.

Only those features which have meaning for the observer are retained in memory.⁷¹¹ While 'The Black Cottage' may feel personal (the reader even hears of

⁷⁰⁹Garde-Hansen, 'MyMemories?', p. 143.

⁷¹⁰Frost clearly intended to parallel these poems given that the famous line 'There are bees in this wall' ('The Black Cottage') returns as 'The attic wasps went missing by like bullets' ('The Fountain', *CPPP*, p. 201).

⁷¹¹This is obviously a more significant problem when the identity in question was an actual person rather than a fictional character. As I pointed out above, both Hardy and Frost are portrayed in certain ways as men, which colours the remembrance of both them and their poetry. Hardy recognised that writing can do harm to a person's posthumous identity when, writing to James Douglas about a fictionalised account of Gissing's life, he notes 'the point at issue seems to be: Does such a book as "The Life of Henry Maitland" injure the dead man's memory? In this case I feel that it may possibly do so' (4.234).

‘her’ habitual posture before the likeness of her father),⁷¹² many more details are lost; the egocentric nature of the poem becomes obvious at the end, when the minister’s speech is magnetised to the personal pronoun (‘As I sit here, and oftentimes, I wish | I could be monarch of a desert land | I could devote [...]’, 61). That ‘no one will care’ links back to Hardyean rememberers, who are isolated in their richness of recall: ‘Nobody says [...] Nobody thinks [...] Nobody calls [...] one there is’ (‘Places’); ‘that nobody else discerned outspread’ (‘Not Only I’). This lack of care, necessary though it is, is a possible cause for grief in poetry’s remembering, and a reason for these poets’ concentration on the processes and the ethics of remembrance. This lack of care operates at both an individual and a communal level, the former influenced by the latter. ‘The Black Cottage’ is perhaps a microcosmic dramatisation of this, since the individual minister is a conduit for the woman’s identity: here he passes this on to one individual, but by virtue of his position as minister, he determines what is preached to a larger collective, and thus which information is retained.⁷¹³

‘The Black Cottage’ might be contrasted with ‘A Servant to Servants’, in which the female speaker rehearses her own family’s narrative, or ‘The Death of the Hired Man’, in which husband, Warren, and wife, Mary, collaborate to produce a memory of farm worker Silas with their dialogue. Frost wrote in a letter ‘Glad to hear that the New England hired man persists with you. It was my purpose to immortalize him in death’ (*LRFI* 707): his mnemonic and poetic endeavour was successful. Everyday memory is recognisable in all these Frost poems.⁷¹⁴ The homely revelations of common parlance are evident throughout the dramatic monologue style of *North of Boston*, such as ‘I thought of Harold’s saying | He studied Latin like the violin | Because he liked it – that an argument!’ (‘Death’, *CPPP* 42). Frost offers varied presentations of identity in the hands of others, but without critical comment, merely suggestive ambiguity. There is also an emotional dimension to joint remembering: ‘affective criteria are also socially significant [...]

⁷¹²I refer here to the lines ‘She always, when she talked about the war, | Sooner or later came and leaned, half knelt | Against the lounge beside it’ (*CPPP*, p. 59), as quoted in Chapter 3.

⁷¹³Part of the poem concerns the content of the minister’s services: Frost has him debate the message he sends to his congregation.

⁷¹⁴I am using the term ‘everyday memory’ in its psychological classification, as discussed in the following section (see Cohen, *Memory in the Real World*). An example of Frost’s care for everyday memory would be at the end of ‘The Fear’ where – though the line between benign and malign is rather thin – ‘Every child should have the memory | Of at least one long-after-bedtime walk’ (*CPPP*, p. 92).

in conversation people tend not only to recall things but also to express some sense of why things are memorable'.⁷¹⁵ This is also emphasised by John Shotter, who focuses on the ways memory can 'move' one. His interest in language is more 'to do with the poetic (Gr. *poiesis* – a making, shaping) powers of language to "give" or "lend" a *first form* to what are in fact only vaguely or partially ordered feelings and activities, to give a shared *sense* to already shared circumstances'.⁷¹⁶ Conversation allows for the exploration of significance(s), as demonstrated by Mary's surprise that 'those days trouble Silas like a dream. | You wouldn't think they would. How some things linger!' (CPPP 42). Indeed, it is not just that it is 'some' things, a partial selection, but also the variable nature of these: 'you wouldn't think' those features which last are necessarily those of obvious merit: memory's inherent contradictions manifest once again.

By focusing on one (seemingly inconsequential) life, and often one speaker, these poems are unassuming, almost facile perhaps in their details. This, though, is how people tend to be remembered: through the apparatus of the everyday. As part of his mourning, Barthes recognises that 'to share the *values* of the silent dailiness (to manage the cooking, the cleaning, the clothes, the choice and as if the past of objects), this was my (silent) way of conversing with her [his mother]. – And this is, her no longer being here, how I can still do it'.⁷¹⁷ Modelling this same style of remembrance, Hardy noticeably frustrates the dead soldiers of 'The Souls of the Slain' who, heading 'homeward and hearthward | To feast on our fame!' (93), are told instead that it is 'Deeds of home; that live yet | Fresh as new – deeds of fondness or fret' (95). Unlike Barthes, here the mothers left behind to 'muse sadly, and murmur | Your doings as boys – | Recall the quaint ways | Of your babyhood's innocent days' (94), the sort of domestic memory which would not distinguish these constantly-termed 'soldiers' from any other men. Personal remembrances take precedence, much to the soldiers' surprise:

– 'Alas! then it seems that our glory
Weighs less in their thought
Than our old homely acts,

⁷¹⁵Edwards and Middleton, 'Joint Remembering', p. 431.

⁷¹⁶John Shotter, 'The Social Construction of Remembering and Forgetting', in *Collective Remembering*, eds. by David Middleton and Derek Edwards (London; Newbury Park; New Delhi: Sage, 1990), pp. 120-38 (p. 124, original emphasis).

⁷¹⁷Barthes, *Mourning Diary*, p. 192 (original emphasis).

And the long-ago commonplace facts
Of our lives – held by us as scarce part of our story,
And rated as nought!’ 95

That this is a cause for an exclamatory ‘alas!’ suggests an opposing value system in the soldiers’ self-memory. This again underlines the difference between storytellers, since, if self-narrating, this would be ‘by us [...] rated as nought’, yet to those remaining, fondly remembering, these ‘homely acts’ have prime value.

‘The Souls of the Slain’, while focusing on the idiosyncratic contrivances of ‘home’, deals with ‘souls’, several lives. Indeed, as the poem poignantly notes, these soldiers ‘plunged, to the fathomless regions | Of myriads forgot’ (95). Again, the amount destined to go unremembered is highlighted. However, this consideration of several lives is book-ended by an individual: the poem begins with ‘me | Alone at the Bill’ (92) who then witnesses these spirits. How far this vision is imagined (or aided by the wild weather) is hard to determine, given Hardy’s use of ‘seemed’ alongside the confident declarations ‘I heard them say’ and ‘I knew them’ (93). The speaker is precisely a witness: although roughly half of the stanzas contain direct speech, this is between the men and their ‘senior’ (93), not the speaker. Like the man of the Puddletown churchyard note, only the speaker hears about, and thus considers the memory of, these people. While the spirits disappear ‘thus speaking’ (95), the reader is unsure of the soundscape, with the last stanza comparing their movements to ‘the Pentecost Wind’ (96). Like ‘The Voice’ with the ‘wind oozing thin’, here ‘the whirr of their wayfaring thinned [...] and but left in the gloaming | Sea-mutterings and me’ (96). The vagueness of the memories is matched by the uncertainty of the entire encounter.

‘The Souls of the Slain’ comes from *Poems of the Past and the Present* (1902), a collection peculiarly concerned with the forgetting of identity. While ‘Souls’ appears as part of the ‘War Poems’ section near the beginning, there is a later arc of three near-consecutive poems which further meditate on the ‘myriads forgot’ in death: ‘His Immortality’ and ‘The To-Be-Forgotten’ (mentioned above), and ‘The Superseded’. ‘The To-Be-Forgotten’ is the poem in which Hardy makes explicit the notion of ‘the second death’ (144) that comes when one passes out of remembrance

entirely.⁷¹⁸ With ‘His Immortality’ dated ‘February 1899’, such thoughts may in part be a response to Walter Pater’s 1885 *Marius the Epicurean*, from which Hardy copied ‘That secondary sort of life which we can give to the dead, in our intensely realized memory of them – the “subjective immortality”, as some now call it’.⁷¹⁹ ‘The To-Be-Forgotten’ teeters on memory’s brink, depicting the known fate of the dead:

‘We here, each day
Are blest with dear recall; as yet, can say
We hold in some soul loved continuance
Of shape and voice and glance.

‘But what has been will be –
First memory, then oblivion’s swallowing sea;
Like men foregone, shall merge into those
Whose story no one knows.

144

Being remembered is a blessing rather than a right, and while ‘dear recall’ speaks to the emotional aspect for the rememberer, the adjective also qualifies ‘recall’, and therefore memory, as something of intense value. Like the deliberate vagaries of Chapter 2, the souls continue as ‘shape and voice and glance’, auditory memory again prized.⁷²⁰ The second stanza here outlines a bleak prospect, like the ‘men foregone’, the speakers’ being forgotten seems a foregone conclusion, too. Hardy’s genius for using enjambment to enact loss in again evidence as the lines, also, ‘merge’. However, Hardy uses his poetry not just to keep stories alive, but to separate individual strands from the general narrative. ‘What has been will be’ is, in the context of the poem, an admission of defeat, yet in reviving people’s stories, one of Hardy’s mnemonic aims is to achieve precisely that ‘what has been will be [again]’ through the reading of the poem.

⁷¹⁸The to-be-forgotten have already admitted that their ‘sped ancestry, | Lie here embraced by deeper death than we’: death, like memory, has different levels.

⁷¹⁹*CP*, p. 143; *LNTHI*, p. 205.

⁷²⁰This is an echo of the poem’s third stanza, which describes the long-dead’s situation with ‘Nor shape nor thought of theirs can you descry | With keenest backward eye’ (p. 144).

The premise of 'The Superseded' is clear if not from the title then the first two lines: 'As newer comers crowd the fore, | We drop behind'.⁷²¹ Like the 'myriads' in 'Souls', here Hardy envisions 'crowding': the sheer numbers involved in mass forgetting are hard to comprehend, just as is our own demise:

'Tis not that we have unforecast
 The drop behind;
 We feel the new must oust the old
 In every kind;
 But yet we think, must we, must we,
 Too, drop behind?

146, original emphasis

This final stanza reveals their perplexity over this most common of fates. Throughout, the relentless refrain 'behind' ensures that any progress is dogged by the reminder of being superseded. These poems all prove Hardy's interest in forgotten identities, but his most moving poems focus on a single individual, rather than a 'we' (as shall be seen). While Hardy the man may rationally accept that 'the new must oust the old', Hardy the poet keeps foregrounding the past for consideration and reconsideration.

Hardy examines the handing over of identity to surviving generations. 'Afterwards', as seen, questions how the speaker will be remembered by those left. It is slightly fanciful in its depth of remembrance, supposing that people would recognise a scene and then connect the departed to it, because "'To him, this must have been a familiar sight'" (553). What is striking is that none of the remembered traits are physical (gait, greatcoat); they reveal mental disposition and personal interests – in short, the intangible and difficult to document. 'Afterwards' is a highly personal rendering of a life, resting on the precarious basis of speech. In contrast, Georgian poet John Masefield's 'Biography' (from the first Georgian anthology) sounds staid, with its pentameter couplets across eight-and-a-half pages. Though opening with a similar concern – 'When I am buried, all my thoughts and acts | Will be reduced to lists of dates and facts'⁷²² – the amount of detail, and generic imagery,

⁷²¹CP, p. 147. Hardy's poetic and layman's observation matches what is known as the 'recency effect' in psychology: the most recent event is more likely to be remembered, such as the last items presented for learning in a memory test.

⁷²²Qtd. in *Georgian Poetry 1911-1912*, p. 119.

leaves this self-titled ‘Biography’ more relentless than intriguing.⁷²³ Hardy uses his poetry to grasp at the impossible within memory, in full knowledge of its actual limitations. Poetry becomes a space of possible recuperation for identity, but only if the right conditions are in place.

‘Afterwards’ relies on a community left behind to talk about the departed. Wordsworth notes that ‘the wish to be remembered by our friends or kindred after death, or even in absence, is [...] a sensation that does not form itself till the *social* feelings have been developed’; although a single individual is being remembered, s/he relies on her/his interconnectedness with a community for this to happen.⁷²⁴ One needs to make an impression in order to be remembered: in the final stanza of ‘To Lizbie Browne’, the speaker regrets his silence, knowing that ‘When on a day | Men speak of me | As not, you’ll say, “And who was he?” – | Yes, Lizbie Browne!’ (132). To have an identity beyond your own knowledge implies that others have something to say about you. The cost of not having your identity related is humorously explored in ‘The Conformers’, Hardy’s sarcastic poem about the loss of individual identity that comes with marriage. By the final stanza, the couple who began with ‘stolen trysts’ and ‘choice ecstasies’ (229) are reduced to something socially useful:

When down to dust we glide
Men will not say askance,
As now, ‘How all the country side
Rings with their mad romance!’
But as they graveward glance
Remark: ‘In them we lose
A worthy pair, who helped advance
Sound parish views.’

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From ‘mad’ to ‘sound’ is a diminishing of personal quirks; this pair are re-made in the mould of culture’s continuation – the stabilising influence of the Church.⁷²⁵

⁷²³Hardy understands that identity cannot be represented by an inventory, as humorously depicted in his heavily polysyllabic ‘A Watering-Place Lady Inventoried’, which, after a sonnet’s-worth of inventory ends with the (under)cutting couplet ‘I should have added her hints that her husband prized her but slenderly, | And that (with a sigh) ‘twas a pity she’d no one to treat her tenderly’ (p. 804). Similarly, Wordsworth notes that ‘the writer of an epitaph is not an anatomist’ (‘Essays Upon Epitaphs’, p. 57).

⁷²⁴Wordsworth, ‘Essays Upon Epitaphs’, p. 50 (original emphasis).

⁷²⁵Writing to Edward Clodd in 1895, Hardy notes ‘what you say is pertinent & true of the modern views of marriage are a survival from the custom of capture & purchase, propped up by a theological superstition’ (2.92).

Given Hardy's tussles with organised religion, the last line can only be taken as a pointed insult to the individual(s): personal advancement forgotten, ecclesiastical containment is what lasts. In discussing Halbwachs, Gosmann notes that 'the individual will mostly remember what the social group he belongs to remembers and repeats to him': once dead, the individual subject is subject to such remembrances as are socially rehearsed.⁷²⁶ While for Wordsworth 'a parish-church, in the stillness of the country, is a visible centre of a community of the living and the dead', in 'The Conformers' it is less a focal point for the community than a way in which the group erases individual identity.⁷²⁷ The churchyard was not as redemptive for Hardy as it was for Wordsworth.

Similar to 'The Conformers', Hardy's 'Julie-Jane' has three stanzas devoted to her unique vitality – 'how 'a would laugh! | Her peony lips would part' – so that, despite dying in childbirth with a baby out of wedlock, this 'Bubbling and brightsome eyed' girl is rescued from being identified only with her transgressions. As Trevor Johnson asserts, the theme of 'Julie-Jane' is to ask if 'we are to judge people solely by their degree of compliance with society's rules'.⁷²⁸ Being actively remembered in this limited and limiting way leaves the 'Conformers' as unknown as the ordinary people of Hardy's churchyard note, with no individuating features.

The last chapter asked: 'Why focus on something so inherently subject to loss as voice?' Here I offer a further problematising factor within memory for conversations. Conversation offers a framework for group remembering, but many features of the spoken mode seen represented in Hardy's and Frost's verse are culturally inherited rather than personally expressive. Although speech is constitutive of identity, it is difficult to determine whether this should be understood as innate or learned identity. The conventions of conversation, with all their politeness strategies and pragmatic implications, are so deeply encoded that these may be retained even in the cognitive degeneration of Alzheimer's disease: 'despite severe memory loss, problems with reasoning and judgement, and loss of insight into their cognitive problems, the victims retain their social graces. Social graces are controlled by the frontal lobes, which in Alzheimer's disease maintain some normal function'.⁷²⁹ This

⁷²⁶Gosmann, *Poetic Memory*, p. 35.

⁷²⁷Wordsworth, 'Essays Upon Epitaphs', p. 56.

⁷²⁸*Critical Introduction*, p. 93.

⁷²⁹Sheldon Margulies, *The Fascinating Body* (Lanham, MD; Toronto; Oxford: Scarecrow Education, 2004), p. 321.

can be seen in Linda Grant's memoir of her mother's struggle with dementia, where 'she knew the conventions of conversation – these had not deserted her – but she could not recall what she had said herself a few moments before'.⁷³⁰ What appears to be most strongly retained, then, is not an individual's idiosyncratic mode(s) of address, but the underlying framework upon which utterances hang. Those culture-learned behaviours, which identify one as a social being but not as a distinct individual, are what last.⁷³¹ In focusing on such distinguishing features in their poetry, then, Hardy and Frost are doing crucial memory work: allowing for personal distinctions that cognition might lose and capturing them within cultural forms.

While veracity becomes a major concern in measuring memory loss, the type of discourse analysis that Edwards and Middleton engage in does not concern itself with the accuracy of remembering, but with how such remembering is structured and what motivates certain types of memory. The discussion of *E.T.* (and indeed Mary and Warren's interaction in Frost's 'Death') depicts the fostering of memories via conversation, suggesting its crucial role in establishing and re-establishing memory. As Chapter 3 foregrounded, conversation is problematic because, as experiments have shown, human beings are extremely bad at reproducing it verbatim.⁷³² In penning these conversations, Hardy and Frost return the reader to a simulated real-time primacy of the voice, but also foreground the performative aspect of their versified memories: the most natural material is unnaturally captured and nurtured by verse. Casual conversations might be naturalistic settings for remembering, but they are not realistic models of human ability to reproduce memories. In exaggerating what conversation can remember, Hardy and Frost draw attention to it as a memory system in itself, suggesting that conversation is uniquely valuable in remembering individuals: what would normally slip under the radar of common parlance, these poems foreground. The social act of conversation that is remembering brings the 'I' and the 'we' into intimate conjunction. At this point, I turn to the cognitive capabilities for identity memory, to uncover how the memory system adapts to know the self, and others.

⁷³⁰Linda Grant, *Remind Me Who I Am, Again* (London: Granta, 1998), p. 30.

⁷³¹Dementia, and particularly Alzheimer's, demonstrates the symbiosis between memory and identity: as memory loss advances, the patient's identity is compromised as her/his knowledge of her/himself contracts.

⁷³²For perhaps the most famous example of this, see Neisser's study of John Dean's testimony in the Watergate trial (Ulric Neisser, 'John Dean's Memory: A Case Study', *Cognition*, 9 (1981): 1-22).

A psychological self: Remembering who I am/you are

‘If X is an interesting or socially significant aspect of memory,
then psychologists have hardly ever studied X’

– Ulric Neisser⁷³³

Despite the cumulative nature of digital friendship, humans do not have an infinite capacity to memorise details of different people. Like the scripts and schemas introduced in Chapter 1, there are similar, culturally-specific, cognitive shortcuts which help categorise identity. Furthermore, humans have valuation systems influenced by affect: the more pedestrian fact about someone may be lost in favour of a personal quirk.⁷³⁴ Hamlet, concerned about his mental capacity, seeks to ‘wipe away all trivial fond records’ in order to give vengeance priority.⁷³⁵ Rather than Hamlet’s self-enforced tabula rasa, this section explains what is readily encoded regarding identity within different cultures, as well as suggesting that Hardy’s and Frost’s poetry seeks to return to memory the triviality and those ‘deeds of fondness’ which cognition may, adaptively, overlook (and Hamlet discard).⁷³⁶ Poetry shows that there is value in things which are not adaptively advantageous to prioritise in terms of identity. To an extent, Hardy’s and Frost’s work asks the reader to relearn memory against the grain of those cognitive preferences which have arisen for individual and communal survival (the identity traits prized are those which ensure the continuation of a given group). Their poetry, therefore, steps outside of traditional cognitive and cultural value systems, allotting value to perhaps unexpected people and traits.

Conversation fosters memory for certain selves, as seen above and as will be explored further in the following section. Here I delineate psychological understandings of why it is ‘certain’ elements or versions of the self that societies remember.⁷³⁷ The self is subjective and changeable (not just in the varied

⁷³³‘Memory: What are the important questions?’, in *Memory Observed: Remembering in Natural Contexts*, ed. by Ulric Neisser (San Francisco: Freeman, 1982), pp. 3-19 (pp. 4-5). This was originally given as part of a 1978 speech.

⁷³⁴Of course, as seen with Linda Grant’s mother and the loss of personal speech patterns, this is not infallible, but a natural impulse among individuals with healthy cognitive functioning.

⁷³⁵1.5.99. All references to *Hamlet* are taken from the text edited by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2006) and are given as act, scene and line numbers in the text.

⁷³⁶This is from Hardy’s ‘The Souls of the Slain’ as quoted earlier in the chapter.

⁷³⁷While I conduct this chapter under the rubric of ‘identity’, psychology would refer to this as the study of ‘the self’, explaining the dominance of this term here.

interpretations of what ‘self’ means, but also via self-development across an individual lifespan) meaning that scientific disciplines have had an uneasy relationship with the concept.⁷³⁸ In order best to explain Hardy’s and Frost’s portrayals of identity with reference to psychology, this section briefly outlines autobiographical memory before considering cross-cultural studies of the self-concept and social cognitive theories of person perception. Since Hardy and Frost more often depict a subject being remembered, rather than self-remembering, there is an overall movement in this section from understanding (one’s own) identity, to remembered identity. Autobiographical memory explains the nature of remembering one’s own life events to create identity, while cross-cultural studies of the self-concept show how culture shapes notions of selfhood. Finally, the field of social cognition sheds light on the nature of remembering others. Throughout, there is a focus on the narrative basis of identity. While psychology has historically excluded the cultural, I want to position identity as a meeting point between differing types of psychological study and show how identity almost forces a synthesis of the cognitive and cultural, emphasising their interdependence and how mutually self-determining they are.⁷³⁹ These enquiries reveal how one is adaptively conditioned to think about identity, in order to see whether, and when, Hardy’s and Frost’s poetry depicts identity markers which fit such cognitive priorities. In this, it exposes what constitutes ‘deeds of fondness’ for a typical Euro-American subject.

Hardy’s and Frost’s contemporary, William James, notes the breadth of the self, since ‘*a man’s Self is the sum total of all that he CAN call his*, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his lands and horses, and yacht and bank-account’.⁷⁴⁰ The various nature of this list demonstrates the struggle to define selfhood in any holistic way.⁷⁴¹ Jonathan D. Brown’s recent *The Self* distinguishes

⁷³⁸During behaviourism’s dominance within psychology, for example, the self was disregarded as awkwardly subjective and thus unworthy of study. Only with the cognitive revolution and the interest in phenomenology did the self return to prominence.

⁷³⁹Notably, Perry R. Hinton entitles his 2016 book *The Perception of People: Integrating Cognition and Culture*, suggesting that when humans are the subject of study, these fields cannot be separated.

⁷⁴⁰James, *Principles*, p. 279 (original emphasis). In 2010, Hazel R. Markus and Shinobu Kitayama published the following reflection: ‘just as the word self is used to index a family of overlapping but not identical terms, the word culture is a stand-in for a similarly untidy and expansive set of material and symbolic concepts’ (‘Cultures and Selves: A Cycle of Mutual Constitution’, *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 5.4 (2010): 420-30 (p. 422, original emphasis).

⁷⁴¹This link is seen in the strange case of A.J., a woman of superior memory, but – unlike other studied patients – this was for autobiographical memory and not a skill transferable to meaningless

between two aspects of the self: ‘the *I* (that aspect of self that actively experiences the world) and the *ME* (that aspect of self that is the object of one’s own attention)’.⁷⁴² The *ME* concerns thoughts and feelings about oneself, rather than the direct awareness of perceptions which the *I* offers.⁷⁴³ As this suggests, both short-term and long-term memory are implicated in an understanding of the self, as present behaviour is weighed up against past experience.

As Social Identity Theory (a ‘social-cognitive theory’) posits, part of the self-concept is in how one relates to a group: while James and Brown respectively consider the shift from *I* to *me*, studying group dynamics reveals the shift from *I* to *we*.⁷⁴⁴ One important aspect of identity is that it is relational: it is both about how you relate to others, or how you fit into a wider community, and about things that can be related, or told, about you.⁷⁴⁵ ‘Relational’ also highlights that outside of self-understanding, identity is a linguistic phenomenon: in the absence of the given individual, others speak or write about her/him in such a way as to express her/his identity. In stressing conversation, and oral communication more generally, Hardy and Frost both engage more with ‘communicative memory’ than ‘cultural memory’ in Jan Assman’s terminology, the form of memory which is consolidated by interactions with other people, rather than with recourse to ‘objectivized culture’.⁷⁴⁶ Communicative memory ‘includes those varieties of collective memory that are

memory tasks, like memorising number strings. A new condition, hyperthymesia, was named for A.J., who appears to be the only known case. Able to remember exactly what she did on given dates from her past, A.J. (notably for this project) found that ‘memorising poetry was painfully difficult’ and struggled with the sorts of experimental tasks that professional mnemonists would find easy (Elizabeth S. Parker, Larry Cahill and James L. McGaugh, ‘A Case of Unusual Autobiographical Remembering’, *Neurocase*, 12 (2006): 35-49 (p. 38). In terms of motivation, experimenters note A.J.’s ‘phenomenal interest and delight in recalling her personal past’ (pp. 45-6). The personal attachment is what is valued here: the personal connection motivates the memory via her emotional engagement.

⁷⁴²Jonathan D. Brown, *The Self* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1998), p. 38.

⁷⁴³This is to be distinguished from social philosopher G. H. Mead’s different – and more famous – model of ‘I’ and ‘me’, where ‘I’ is the response of the individual to the attitudes of the community and the ‘me’ learned in interaction with others (see Mead, *Mind, Self and Society*, ed. by Charles W. Morris (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 196).

⁷⁴⁴Michael A. Hogg and Kipling D. Williams, ‘From *I* to *We*: Social Identity and the Collective Self’, *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 4.1 (2000): 81-97 (p. 92).

⁷⁴⁵It is worth pointing out that Constantine Sedikides and Marilynn Brewer have ‘adopted a tripartite definition of the self’ in which ‘the relational self refers to a set of attributes that are shared with significant others’ (Sedikides, ‘Putting Our Selves Together: Integrative Themes and Lingering Questions’, in *The Social Self: Cognitive, Interpersonal, and Intergroup Perspectives*, eds. by Joseph P. Forgas and Kipling D. Williams (New York; London; Hove: Psychology Press, 2002), pp. 365-380 (p. 366).

⁷⁴⁶‘Collective Memory and Cultural Identity’, trans. by John Czaplicka, *New German Critique*, 65 (1995): 125-133 (p. 128). See also Erll’s English rendering of the table which appeared in a 1992 paper by Jan Assman (see Erll, *Memory in Culture*, p. 29).

based exclusively on everyday communications'.⁷⁴⁷ While not all of Hardy's and Frost's poems adhere entirely to this category, the 'everyday' informs both their memories and modes of remembering. Again, this puts emphasis on the more ephemeral aspects of experience, since communicative memory's 'most important characteristic is its limited temporal horizon', not least because 'death puts an end to the oral passing on of lived experience'.⁷⁴⁸ Memory as depicted within Hardy's and Frost's rural communities is put back into the mind via the mouths of people; as their dislike of the monument later shows, this location and type of memory is the poetically preferred one.

Given their commitment to individuating characteristics, one might expect Hardy and Frost to focus on autobiographical memory, the composite of episodic (for discrete, experienced events) and semantic memory (knowledge of the external world), which allows the creation and maintenance of a coherent self-identity. However, both of these lyric poets constantly forestall this 'I' perspective, mediating identity instead through another's memory of the individual. In 1978, Ulric Neisser argued that the 'important questions' in memory were those which would be better answered by 'the detailed examination of naturally occurring memory phenomena in the real world, and paying special attention to individual differences'.⁷⁴⁹ Though psychology scrutinises phenomena in ways the imaginative world of poetry does not, the attention to 'individual differences' will be seen as part of poetry's inherent mnemonic value. Neisser's opening salvo was the beginning of a greater interest in psychology in what has been called everyday memory – memory that is informed by, and inflected through, the necessities of life. Out of the controlled conditions of the laboratory, memory comes into contact, or conflict, with culture. It is this nexus which forms a starting point from which to push into the many cultural manifestations that affect poetic memory.

In 2000, Conway and Pleydell-Pearce proposed the Self-Memory System (SMS), as a way of understanding the operations of autobiographical memory.⁷⁵⁰ The SMS has 'two main components, *the working self* and the *autobiographical*

⁷⁴⁷Jan Assman, 'Collective Memory', p. 126.

⁷⁴⁸Jan Assman, 'Collective Memory', p. 127. The second quotation here is Erll discussing communicative memory (*Memory in Culture*, p. 4).

⁷⁴⁹Cohen, *Memory in the Real World*, p. 2.

⁷⁵⁰Martin A. Conway and Christopher W. Pleydell-Pearce, 'The Construction of Autobiographical Memories in the Self-Memory System', *Psychological Review*, 107.2 (2000): 261-288.

memory knowledge base’, again showing the interaction between short- and long-term memory, the key being that ‘cognition is driven by goals: memory is motivated’.⁷⁵¹ Understanding the motivations behind autobiographical memory helps uncover the value systems in place for identity construction. The SMS is governed by two things: coherence and correspondence (the latter because the self-concept needs to be able to correspond with some real-world fact).⁷⁵² Coherence, or self-coherence, would explain the selectivity seen in autobiographical memory, as the ‘SMS operates to protect itself from change (to maintain coherence)’, again displaying the memory system’s adaptive priorities.⁷⁵³ What are kept are those experiences which align well with an individual’s goals, providing an ‘adaptive coherence’.⁷⁵⁴ Those events which match our expectations of our own identity are the best retained.

While the SMS explains memory for identity in cognitive terms, cross-cultural studies of identity and autobiographical memory, particularly by Qi Wang, endow the question of what is valued in remembering a person with a distinctly cultural emphasis, foregrounding ‘the critical role of culture in shaping personal remembering’.⁷⁵⁵ Wang distinguishes between ‘the remembered self and the conceptual self’.⁷⁵⁶ Self-concept and autobiographical memory are mutually shaping: much in the manner of the correspondence and coherence of the SMS, ‘self-concept enables privileged encoding of and access to autobiographical information that confirms the views about the self favored by the culture; autobiographical memory, in turn, sustains the development and maintenance of a self-concept that integrates

⁷⁵¹Conway, Martin A., ‘Memory and the Self’, *Journal of Memory and Language*, 53 (2005): 594-628 (p. 594, original emphasis).

⁷⁵²A testament to the Romantic poets’ interest in autobiographical memory, Martin A. Conway (with Jefferson A. Singer and Angela Tagini) has since applied the SMS to Wordsworth in ‘The Self and Autobiographical Memory: Correspondence and Coherence’, *Social Cognition*, 22.5 (2004): 491-529.

⁷⁵³Conway, ‘Memory and the Self’, p. 598. Given that Hardy penned his own *Life* as if it were a biography, it is worth establishing autobiography itself as something separate again. This is an account purposely constructed to be understood by others, often dealing in a single medium (text, speech, and so on). In the space between autobiographical memory and [auto]biography, memory can be hijacked for the purposes of establishing an intended identity (as the three-volume Thompson biography of Frost attests). Certainly, Hardy’s *Life* has been much commented on by critics such as Millgate for portraying a particular vision of Hardy, with the use of those passages that Hardy took care to edit out of the final draft. See also Richard H. Taylor’s documentation of these draft passages.

⁷⁵⁴Conway, ‘Memory and the Self’, p. 596.

⁷⁵⁵Qi Wang and Martin A. Conway, ‘The Stories We Keep: Autobiographical Memory in American and Chinese Middle-Aged Adults’, *Journal of Personality*, 72:5 (2004): 911-938 (p. 912).

⁷⁵⁶Qi Wang, ‘The Emergence of Cultural Self-Constructs: Autobiographical Memory and Self-Description in European American and Chinese Children’, *Developmental Psychology*, 40:1 (2004): 3-15 (p. 11).

cultural views about the self as a central component'.⁷⁵⁷ The self-concept varies heavily between cultures, and is a selective shorthand for a generalisable self within a given society. Hardy and Frost, though, individuate within their own depicted cultures, offering a more expansive model of memory than that harnessed to cognitive instrumentality.⁷⁵⁸

Building on Steven D. Cousins' scholarship, which shows that 'the perception of self is influenced by culture-specific idioms of personhood', Markus and Kitayama open their influential 1991 paper by observing the differences even in Eastern and Western proverbs pertaining to the self: 'In America, "the squeaky wheel gets the grease." In Japan, "the nail that stands out gets pounded down"'.⁷⁵⁹ How the self is construed in relation to others is a prevailing theme of these cross-cultural studies, all agreeing on the finding that Western cultures focus on prizing 'individuality and autonomy'.⁷⁶⁰ Having famously characterised Euro-American identity as independent and Asian identity as interdependent, Markus and Kitayama have since described self and culture as being in 'an ongoing cycle of mutual constitution' where 'people are socioculturally shaped shapers of the world'.⁷⁶¹ Hardy and Frost themselves must be seen as 'shaped shapers', creating cultural products. However, for all Hardy's and Frost's cultural shaping, the level of

⁷⁵⁷Qi Wang, 'Culture and the Development of Self-Knowledge', *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 51:4 (2006): 182-87 (p. 182).

⁷⁵⁸The argument for honouring individual differences is also one which pertains to memory studies: Olick promotes a move from 'collective memory' in part because 'collective' suggests 'an overly unifying framework that washes over genuine distinctions of kind' ('The Two Cultures', p. 345).

⁷⁵⁹Steven D. Cousins, 'Culture and Self-Perception in Japan and the United States', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 56.1 (1989): 124-31 (p. 129); Hazel R., and Shinobu Kitayama, 'Culture and the Self: Implications for Cognition, Emotion, and Motivation', *Psychological Review*, 98.2 (1991): 224-53 (p. 224). Cousins used the Twenty Statements Test (TST) in which participants write twenty responses to 'Who am I?' Or 'I am...'. Additionally, Cousins administered a 'contextualized free-response questionnaire' in which participants would "Describe yourself [...] at home," "at school" ('Culture and Self-Perception', p. 126).

⁷⁶⁰Qi Wang, 'Are Asians Forgetful? Perception, Retention, and Recall in Episodic Remembering', *Cognition*, 111 (2009): 123-31 (p. 124). Cultural differences in cognitive processing styles is another area of psychological research. Richard Nisbett's work focuses on differences in visual attention, even to the levels of saccades (explored in Chapter 1; see Lea Winerman, 'The Culture-Cognition Connection', *Monitor on Psychology*, 37.2 (2006): 64; and Hannah Faye Chua, Julie E. Boland and Richard E. Nisbett, 'Cultural Variation in Eye Movements During Scene Perception', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America (PNAS)*, 102.35 (2005): 12629-2633). For a good overview of such studies (though in the emerging field of cultural neuroscience) see Natalie Ambady, delineating cultural differences in object and scene encoding, suggesting that 'people from different cultures recruit different neural systems even when performing the same task equally competently' Ambady, p. 74).

⁷⁶¹Markus and Kitayama, 'Cultures and Selves', p. 421.

individuating detail found in their poems bespeaks a belief in, and distinct valuing of, a person's (supposed) unique traits.

Wang collaborated with Conway (of the SMS) to study of 'The Stories We Keep: Autobiographical Memory in American and Chinese Middle-Aged Adults', analysing memory content as a function of culture, life period and gender.⁷⁶² Once again, the self figures in terms of what can be related about it, privileging the epistemic function of the self, or life, story. Hypothesising that Euro-Americans think and talk more about their memories, Wang and Conway found 'a marginally significant culture effect on the frequency of rehearsal' with Americans 'reported to have thought or talked about their memories more frequently than did Chinese'.⁷⁶³ This revisiting of memories in Western cultures places a value on the sharing of self-memories in order both to affirm identity and to participate within society.⁷⁶⁴ The study also found that Euro-Americans 'scored significantly higher' for the 'rating of emotional intensity', returning to valuing the personal and memories predicated upon emotional attachment.⁷⁶⁵

I stress these cross-cultural studies of autobiographical memory/the self-construct in order to show that Hardy's and Frost's construals of personhood in their poems come from a culturally-inflected, Western value system in which 'individuals distinguish themselves from others and reaffirm their unique identity'.⁷⁶⁶ The problem for psychology, as much as for Hardy's and Frost's poetry, is how an individual's complex identity is pieced together in consciousness (and in memory), and how this might be disentangled from social identity – if indeed it can be.

Memory is conditioned by loss, since the stimulus (in this case, a person) is absent. Therefore, where memory fails, one hypothesises and relies on cues and schematic shaping to flesh out a person's identity. Like those expectancy patterns

⁷⁶²Wang continues her research into autobiographical memory in terms of story-telling, with a recent article for PBS entitled 'Why Americans are obsessed with telling their own life stories'.

⁷⁶³Qi Wang and Martin A. Conway, 'The Stories We Keep: Autobiographical Memory in American and Chinese Middle-Aged Adults', *Journal of Personality*, 72:5 (2004): 911-938 (p. 925).

⁷⁶⁴Hardy comes from a memory-rich heritage: according to Ralph Pite, 'both Hardy's grandmothers became treasuries of local/knowledge and family history. Betty, Hardy says, could be relied upon to know what had taken place in the parish: "if ever there was any doubt as to the position of particular graves in the churchyard, the parson, sexton, and relatives applied to her as an unerring authority"' (*Thomas Hardy: The Guarded Life* (London: Picador, 2006), pp. 56-57). See Gittings for an overview of Hardy's relatives and their practice of sharing anecdotes (*Older Hardy*, p. 55).

⁷⁶⁵Wang and Conway, 'The Stories We Keep', p. 925.

⁷⁶⁶Wang, 'Culture and the Development of Self-Knowledge', *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 51:4 (2006): 182-87 (p. 183).

discussed in Chapter 1, schemas also pertain to the way other people's identities are perceived and remembered. The field of social cognition variously studies how people interact with each other through person perception and person memory.⁷⁶⁷ People schemas are related to (in research and common parlance) stereotyping, or the reliance on prior knowledge to fill in the blanks.⁷⁶⁸ In 1981, Claudia Cohen showed that the remembered traits of another person might depend on how that person was categorised in the mind of the perceiver. Participants were shown a video of a woman and told either that she was a librarian or a waitress. Consistent with this knowledge, those who thought the woman a librarian remembered that she wore glasses and liked classical music: category-based processing influenced memory.⁷⁶⁹ These cognitive-cultural containers can limit remembered identity, hence Hardy's concern in 'The Conformers' or the ethical problems posed by the Minister framing 'The Black Cottage' narrative. As Cohen notes, 'subjects selectively processed highly concrete information about physical appearance and lifestyle rather than personality-related behaviors' – the opposite of Hardy's approach in such poems as 'Not Only I', discussed below.⁷⁷⁰

Person Memory, an early edited collection on social perception, studied two aspects which are particularly interesting as regards Hardy and Frost. Firstly, Donal Carlston raises the question of 'trait inference memory'. This refers to gauging another's character and remembering their traits (in order to make and/or re-value judgements about them). Having noted that 'memory for trait inferences, like semantic memory, involves a greater level of cognitive and semantic involvement than event memory', Carlston defines trait inferences as 'relatively processed representations of what an observer thinks characterizes a particular person'.⁷⁷¹ This

⁷⁶⁷For an overview of social cognition as a discipline see David E. Hamilton and Donal Carlston, 'The Emergence of Social Cognition', in *The Oxford Handbook of Social Cognition*, ed. by Donal Carlston (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 16-32.

⁷⁶⁸See Perry R. Hinton, *The Perception of People: Integrating Cognition and Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 201-230 for an overview of stereotypes and Lee Jussim *Social Perception and Social Reality: Why Accuracy Dominates Bias and Self-Fulfilling Prophecy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 269-306 for a riposte. I am aware of the problems of schemas and the move to the associative network model (Hinton, *Perception*, pp. 33-34; pp. 38-39), but given the continued use of Bartlett within this thesis, I keep to his terminology.

⁷⁶⁹Jussim cites another study from Snyder and Uranowitz (1978) which saw sexual stereotyping change participant memories of a previously described life (*Social Perception*, p. 68).

⁷⁷⁰Claudia E. Cohen, 'Person Categories and Social Perception: Testing Some Boundaries of the Processing Effects of Prior Knowledge', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 40.3 (1981): 441-452 (p. 449).

⁷⁷¹Donal E. Carlston, 'Events, Inferences, and Impression Formation,' in *Person Memory: The Cognitive Basis of Social Perception*, eds. by Reid Hastie, Thomas M. Obstrom, Ebbe B. Ebbesen,

is closer to what Hardy and Frost are trying to replicate in their poems: those characteristics encoded during interaction and retained afterwards, like the old woman of 'The Black Cottage' 'lean[ing], half kne[eling] | Against the lounge' (CPPP 59). The chapter following Carlston's further explores how information about a person is acquired. In explaining this, it defines an impression as 'a perceiver's organized cognitive representation of another person'.⁷⁷² Declaring it 'intentionally broad', this emphasises again the difficulties in psychologically detailing how so complex a thing as identity is understood. 'Impression' is also an intriguing term regarding Hardy. He not only declared in 1917 that 'I hold that the whole mission of poetry is to record impressions, not convictions', but prefaced *Poems of the Past and the Present* (1901) with the assertion that 'unadjusted impressions have their value, and the road to a true philosophy of life seems to lie in humbly recording diverse readings of its phenomena as they are forced upon us by chance and change'.⁷⁷³ 'Change' denotes how fast such phenomena speed past the experiencer: if these impressions are not recorded, they are forgotten.

Hardy's and Frost's poems do not just watch characters reliving memories, but posit new person memory in the reader, as the poems depict characters/speakers. Before the dialogue-heavy bulk of 'One Hundred Collars', Frost offers a thirteen-line portrait of Doctor Magoon so that the reader has not just an overview of his home life but a simulated trait impression of a man whose friends

meet him in the general store at night,
Preoccupied with formidable mail,
Rifling a printed letter as he talks.

CPPP 49

This colours the reader's understanding of Magoon's nervous encounter with Lafe, his well-built, possibly-threatening roommate. This brief character sketch provides a backdrop to Magoon's identity which the reader then reflects on as s/he witnesses

Robert S. Wyer, Jr., David L. Hamilton and Donal E. Carlston (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1980), pp. 89-119 (p. 92). For a chapter linking implicit social cognition to specific memory processes and models, see Carlston's 'Models of Implicit and Explicit Mental Representation', *The Handbook of Implicit Social Cognition: Measurement, Theory and Applications*, eds. by B. Gawronski and B. K. Payne (New York: Guilford Press, 2010), pp. 38-61.

⁷⁷²David E. Hamilton, Lawrence B. Katz and Von O. Leirer, 'Organizational Processes in Impression Formation', in *Person Memory: The Cognitive Basis of Social Perception*, eds. by Reid Hastie, Thomas M. Obstrom, Ebbe B. Ebbesen, Robert S. Wyer, Jr., David L. Hamilton and Donal E. Carlston (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1980), pp. 121-153 (p. 123).

⁷⁷³*Life*, p. 408; *CP*, p. 84. Hardy was also interested in Impressionist art (see 1.191).

Magoon taking a room that someone else refused for fear of ‘being robbed or murdered’ (*CPPP* 50). As a tense conversation unfolds between the roommates for the majority of the poem, the reader evaluates Magoon’s utterances in the light of what s/he has already heard about him from the poem.

Hardy’s and Frost’s poems stand in the face of a relative paucity of information about those with whom we share our lives and environment(s). Psychologists agree that for all of culture’s shaping hand, and categorical schemata, memory responds both to the overriding impression as well as the individual occurrence. As Perry R. Hinton determines, ‘schematic processing organizes an experience, but the memory of specific detail individuates the recall’.⁷⁷⁴ Sceptical of expectancy effects, Lee Jussim highlights how often expectancy-inconsistent information about people is remembered and concludes:

expectancy-inconsistent information is, by definition, surprising. Therefore, it really stands out and is more readily remembered. However, when people are not sure about whether they have received information about some target trait or behaviour, they have to make an educated guess. And expectations guide those guesses, thereby favouring expectancy-consistent information.⁷⁷⁵

Jussim shows that the same conundrum of being familiar yet striking enough to be memorable occurs in perception of people as much as anything else. By filling their poems with individuating characteristics, Hardy and Frost seek to preserve those personalities lost and tempt the reader’s memory.

Hardy’s and Frost’s poetry is particularly concerned with those life stories, those memories, which outlast the mortal, through a mixture of oral and textual tellings. The end of Wang and Conway’s paper moves towards this, acknowledging that ‘studies should examine the social and regulatory functions of memory sharing, thus situating the use of memories not only *within* the person but *between* persons’, bringing back the idea of the voice which speaks with others about an individual.⁷⁷⁶ The next section on identity-through-conversation considers how this is nurtured by verse: I show that poetic memory for identity is less held within the text than engendered between page and person, text and reader.

⁷⁷⁴Hinton, *Perception of People*, p. 36.

⁷⁷⁵Jussim, *Social Perception*, p. 140.

⁷⁷⁶Wang and Conway, ‘The Stories We Keep’, p. 931 (original emphasis).

Telling someone's story: Versified narratives

'I cannot bear my fate as writ,
I'd have my life unbe;
Would turn my memory to a blot,
Make every relic of me rot'

— Hardy, 'Tess's Lament',⁷⁷⁷

William James defines what he calls the social self as 'the recognition which he gets from his mates', that which others associate with your being 'you'.⁷⁷⁸ In this way, even the most personal details of someone's identity are implicated in the social sphere: once again, the line between private and public, individual and collective, is hard to draw. James continues, 'properly speaking, *a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him* and carry an image of him in their mind'.⁷⁷⁹ Here, several individuals' images comprise a composite identity of a person: just as the one self is many selves, this is reflected socially where a group of selves all 'know' (in their peculiar ways) one self. However, this severally-held identity is precarious: who remembers certain aspects of an individual? Hardy's great concern with identity is what perhaps should last (or what one would choose as representative) and yet fails to.

As seen from 'Afterwards' in Chapter 3, there is an implicit concern over how the speaker will be remembered after his death: 'will any say' the kinds of statements the speaker intends to inspire?

When the hedgehog travels furtively over the lawn,
One may say, 'He strove that such innocent creatures should come to no
harm'
[...]
Will this thought rise on those who will meet my face no more,
'He was one who had an eye for such mysteries'?

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The number of questions emphasises the lack of certainty and of any authorial control over what 'will' or 'may' be said in his absence. Indeed, in its repetition,

⁷⁷⁷CP, p. 177.

⁷⁷⁸James, *Principles*, p. 281.

⁷⁷⁹James, *Principles*, pp. 281-82 (original emphasis).

‘will’ in this poem seems to become less a marker of the future tense than a linguistic attempt to ‘will’ these possible utterances into being. Hardy seeks for people not simply to be remembered, but for the posthumous memory of them to match what an individual thinks of her/himself. The late short poem ‘Not Known’ outlines the divide between self-knowledge and group-knowledge, whether the speaker is alive or dead.⁷⁸⁰ Chapter 2 saw speakers ‘unknowing’ in the present reach knowledge belatedly, but the past tense of this title suggests these things are ‘Not Known [and never will be]’:

They know the wilings of the world,
 The latest flippancy;
 They know each jest at hazard hurled,
 But know not me.

They know a phasm they name as me,
 In whom I should not find
 A single self-held quality
 Of body or mind.

917

‘They’ are forward-looking, concentrating on the ‘latest’ happenings. While the poem does not explicitly set this up in antagonism with the past, reading it alongside the greater body of Hardy’s verse suggests that were ‘they’ more alive to more than just the present they would have a more rounded understanding. The curtailed last line refuses to fulfil the measurements of common metre, much as the speaker finds their vision of him unfulfilling. What is missing is the personally valued, the ‘self-held qualit[ies]’ of the speaker. Like ‘The Souls of the Slain’, the ‘self-held’ and that perpetuated differ. Hardy’s speakers are frustrated because of the lack of accord: hoping to recognise her/himself in the posthumous identity, too often s/he meets with a stranger. Recognition of identity works at two levels in Hardy’s poetry: the speaker wishes certain traits to be recognised about her/himself during life which would therefore lead to a reflexive self-recognition of her/himself in the posthumous identity sustained by others.

⁷⁸⁰It is unclear in this instance whether the speaker is alive or not. The suggestion is that ‘they’ only know a ‘phasm’ of the speaker at all, but I use it here to demonstrate Hardy’s particular concern over the unshareable nature of self-knowledge.

In no poem is the loss of identity markers more poignant than 'Not Only I', with its concern for the speaker's encoffined attributes:

Not only I
Am doomed awhile to lie
In this close bin with earthen sides;
But the things I thought, and the songs I sang,
And the hopes I had, and the passionate pang
For the people I knew
Who passed before me,
Whose memory barely abides;
And the visions I drew
That daily upbore me!

And the joyous springs and summers,
And the jaunts with blithe newcomers,
And my plans and appearances; drives and rides
That fanned my face to a lively red;
And the grays and blues
Of the far-off views,
That nobody else discerned outspread;
And little achievements for blame or praise;
Things left undone; things left unsaid;
In brief, my days!

Compressed here in six feet by two,
In secrecy
To lie with me
Till the Call shall be,
Are all these things I knew,
Which cannot be handed on;
Strange happenings quite unrecorded,
Lost to the world and disregarded,
That only thinks: 'Here moulders till Doom's-dawn
A woman's skeleton.'

782-83

This is no Wordsworthian Lucy who becomes incorporated into the earth, but someone who is shut 'in this close bin [...] compressed here in six feet by two'. The measure of the verse matches the confines of the coffin, unable to offer much more flexibility. The only release from the grave that the speaker can imagine is the preliminary archaeological find of 'a woman's skeleton', the basic physical remains which reveal nothing of the traits over whose loss the speaker agonises. David

Perkins suggests that it is ‘in the obsessive attention to the process of memory that Hardy dramatizes the subjective isolation of the individual. For the content of memory is felt to be inevitably personal. It is a rummage-room of past incidents and feelings which have no value or meaning except to the individual, and of which no one else has any knowledge’.⁷⁸¹ Memory and identity are entwined in this assessment, but although Perkins determines that such things ‘have no value [...] except to the individual’, Hardy identifies, and affords them, wider cultural value.

Frost’s poem which deals with reading identity from preliminary archaeological findings is ‘To an Ancient’ (mirroring the title of Hardy’s ‘An Ancient to Ancients’).⁷⁸² The paucity of legible identity able to be gained from remains is here reconsidered:

Your claims to immortality were two.
The one you made, the other one you grew.
Sorry to have no name for you but You.

We never knew exactly where to look,
But found one in the delta of a brook,
One in a cavern where you used to cook.

Coming on such an ancient human trace
Seems as expressive of the human race
As meeting someone living face to face.

We date you by your depth in silt and dust
Your probable brute nature is discussed.
At which point we are totally nonplussed.

You made the eolith, you grew the bone,
The second one more peculiarly your own,
And likely to have been enough alone.

You make me ask if I would go to time
Would I gain anything by using rhyme?
Or aren’t the bones enough I live to lime?

CPPP 345

⁷⁸¹ ‘Hardy and the Poetry of Isolation’, in *Hardy: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Albert J. Guerard (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963), pp. 143-159 (p. 148).

⁷⁸² This Hardy poem hears its male speaker address his fellow ‘gentlemen’ about how ‘we are clean forgot’ (p. 695) in the places they used to frequent. Meyers instead sees that ‘Hardy’s “An Ancient to Ancients” influenced [Frost’s] “A Servant to Servants”’, a comparison which, for me, only holds for the mirroring of the title and the sense of individual address (*Robert Frost: A Biography*, p. 76).

Unusually, Frost devalues poetry in favour of the human remains left behind. He promotes the bones ‘Rather than consolation (*ars longa, vita brevis*)’, which poetry traditionally offers.⁷⁸³ The poem questions what constitutes ‘enough’ of an identity marker to translate across time. For all the poem appears confident in its supposition that seeing a bone compares with ‘meeting [...] face to face’, the triple-rhymed stanzas fail to progress to any discernible gain in knowledge, and the final questions go unanswered. Indeed, the poem is more about the speaker than it is the unnamed John(/Jane?) Doe, defenceless against claims of a ‘probable’, rather than actual, ‘brute nature’. The poem undoes itself with irony, since chance governs the finding of this ‘Ancient’ (‘we never knew exactly where to look’) and the experts are ‘totally nonplussed’ by anything beyond measurable data points.

Unlike ‘To An Ancient’, the speaker of ‘Not Only I’ cares less for the corporeal than the supracorporeal – those features beyond the body. The title, though, presents a conundrum: ‘Not Only I’, as if ‘I’ is bound – either by the speaker or by popular perception – solely to the physically observable features of a person, yet the poem makes the case that these supracorporeal features are more representative of the ‘I’ than any physical description could be. Remembering identity via a person’s unique traits is not something confined to Hardy’s poetry: on the death of his mother, he writes to Edward Clodd ‘I shall miss her in many ways – her powers in humorous remark, for instance, which were immediate. It took me hours to be able to think & express what she had at the tip of her tongue’ (3.119). In real-life remembering, Hardy uses the seemingly minor memory of his mother’s mental characteristic to both remember and re-affirm her identity.

‘Not Only I’'s speaker knows that her chance of being remembered rests within other people, noting that her own love of ‘people I know | Who passed before me’ will die with her, but that of these people themselves their ‘memory barely abides’. ‘Not Only I’ is a poem about forgetting and which sees identity itself as informed by forgetting: it is what is left still when other things are winnowed away either unconsciously (by time or mental capacity) or consciously (by selective self-fashioning). For all its attendant losses, though, Hardy is wedded to the idea that

⁷⁸³Sydney Lea, ‘From Sublime to Rigmorole’, p. 92. Lea usefully compares ‘To an Ancient’ with Frost’s ‘A Missive Missile’, in which another ancient trace is left and the speaker considers how ‘to give the hint | And be successfully conveyed’ (pp. 92-93).

survivor's conversations about the dead constitute the continuation of memory.⁷⁸⁴

The epigraph from Hardy's poem 'Tess's Lament' proves this by reversing the predicament: unhappy with her life story, Tess wishes that 'folk forgot me quite'.⁷⁸⁵ If she could avoid being 'writ' and make her relics 'rot', Tess could rest assured that, after her death, there would be 'gone all trace of me!' (177), a thought in which she delights.⁷⁸⁶ Tess seeks a 'contrived forgetfulness', a phrase Hardy coins in 'Last Words to a Dumb Friend'.⁷⁸⁷ Here, Hardy seeks to erase the memory of his pet cat in order to avoid the pain of grief. Yet even though the cat was 'dumb', a 'speechless thing' (657), the memory of its actions remains: 'Housemate, I can think you still | Bounding to the window-sill' (658). While remembering is difficult, Hardy also recognises the challenge of forgetting. Although the first line here has an implicit 'of' (I can think [of] you still'), the lack of distance between modal and main verb hints at the creative cognitive capacity to bring something back by remembering, and have the cat 'bound' across the line break at least.

To be suitably forgotten, for Tess, is for people to be able 'to stand and tell | Of my day's work as done' (175) and that alone. Not entirely forgotten, Tess strives to erase her individuating features and retain only the communally valuable narrative: she worked. Yet Hardy mixes forms of remembrance here: although the (usually sought-after) focus on the personal is gone, Tess is still being 'told of', spoken about. Identity depends upon what you are able to tell about yourself and what can be told about you. 'To tell', the verb of ballads, returns – there is a fundamental sharing concerning identity: how you can pass on, and thereby extend, aspects of yourself. Conversation has the capacity, these poets suggest, to nurture the individual aspects of identity, but equally can – as Edwards and Middleton showed above – operate as an unrevised cache for cultural values.

⁷⁸⁴CP, p. 175 Other obvious examples are 'His Immortality' and 'Afterwards'. 'Her Immortality' is a meeting between a past lover and a dead woman's shade and, as such, does not comprise conversation among the living. However, once again, the woman is keen to point out that "A Shade but in its mindful ones | Has immortality; | By living, me you keep alive, | By dying you slay me. | In you resides my single power / Of continuance here" (p. 56).

⁷⁸⁵'Tess's Lament' also appears in *Poems of the Past and the Present*, along with the arc of poems I highlighted bemoaning the forgetting of identity, and the later discussed 'Sapphic Fragment'.

⁷⁸⁶Raymond Chapman poignantly comments that with 'I'd have my life unbe', Hardy 'combines one of the most common English prefixes with one of the most common verbs to convey utter despair and weariness' (p. 82).

⁷⁸⁷I see these poems as linked also because they use the same word of erasure: Tess would 'turn my memory to a blot' (p. 177) and the speaker of 'Last Words' claims 'better bid his memory fade, | Better blot each mark he made' (p. 657). The father-speaker of Hardy's 1901 poem 'A Daughter Returns' makes the conscious choice 'I'll not try to blot out every memory of thee' (p. 904).

‘Not Only I’ seems generalisable to several personalities since the woman goes unnamed, indicating unspecified ‘songs’, ‘thoughts’, ‘springs and summers’ that will be lost rather than a taxonomy of the readily identifiable. However, even this is culturally inflected, showing that this woman is likely a country-dweller (allowing space for ‘far-off views’ and outdoor ‘drives and rides | That fanned my face to a lively red’), and the poem reflects her values (people should be remembered for their musical, sporting and seasonal preferences). It is tempting to read these as ‘her personal values’, and interpret the spoken utterance as a personally-motivated expression, but they are unmistakably markers of culture.

Anthropologist Ruth Benedict notes that by the time a person can talk ‘he is the little creature of his culture, and by the time he is grown and able to take part in its activities, its habits are his habits, its beliefs his beliefs, its impossibilities his impossibilities’.⁷⁸⁸ Although Benedict’s perspective is cultural rather than cognitive, she echoes William James observation that ‘living creatures [...] are bundles of habits’.⁷⁸⁹ As Chapter 1 showed, habit seems negative in James’s terminology given that ‘*habit diminishes the conscious attention with which our acts are performed*’.⁷⁹⁰ While this refers to the minutiae of expectancy patterns, James opens his discussion of habit to determine it ‘the enormous fly-wheel of society, its most precious conservative agent’.⁷⁹¹ In this figuration, cultural predilections form the loss of other possibilities, since habit ‘dooms us all to fight out the battle of life upon the lines of our nurture or our early choice [...] there is no other for which we are fitted, and it is too late to begin again’.⁷⁹² James considers habit in its all-encompassing sense, but here I focus on Hardy’s and Frost’s use of the particular cultural medium that is poetry, born out of the early exposure to language. Hardy’s and Frost’s verse memories are necessarily couched in language, but many are further situated in the spoken mode and thus within the selection of words a given speaker uses. Deriving the specific from the general, Hardy and Frost help demonstrate the way that language remembers people, and *how* it is used to remember people. This ‘little

⁷⁸⁸Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* (1934; repr. Boston; New York: Mariner, Houghton Mifflin, 2005), 3. Hardy copies out ‘No one can think but through the general thought, refined by centuries of culture & experience. Absolute individualism is nonsense’ from an extract from ‘Amiel’s Journal’ printed in the *Contemporary Review* in 1885 (*LNTHI*, p. 162).

⁷⁸⁹James, *Principles*, p. 109.

⁷⁹⁰James, *Principles*, p. 119 (original emphasis).

⁷⁹¹James, *Principles*, p. 125.

⁷⁹²James, *Principles*, p. 125.

creature of his culture' also emphasises how early the socialisation process occurs and shapes a subject.

Wang's research into autobiographical memory follows Nelson and Fivush in studying 'the emergence of autobiographical memory', noting the importance of 'the acquisition of complex spoken or signed language, narrative comprehension and production, memory talk with parents and others'.⁷⁹³ Reaffirming Edwards and Middleton's emphasis on conversation as remembering, it is important that these frameworks are administered early, since 'family memory sharing may serve as a critical forum for cultural transmission, in which parents model to children the appropriate ways of organizing, evaluating, and sharing their past experiences'.⁷⁹⁴ Fivush and Bauer note that children 'begin to participate in shared reminiscing [...] almost as soon as they begin to talk'.⁷⁹⁵ Their focus on 'shared reminiscing', or 'adult-guided reminiscing' again underlines the importance of caregivers in inculcating these conversational frameworks at an early stage.⁷⁹⁶ Indeed, 'by about 24 months of age, children begin to contribute to memory conversations by providing mnemonic content'.⁷⁹⁷ The cognitive skill of language acquisition is immediately brought into conjunction with the cultural skill of conversation and mutual understanding. This again stresses the social function that group remembering serves for cultural cohesion, something depicted particularly in Frost's *North of Boston* where there is, if not an audience, then at least an interlocutor.

In likening culture to language, Benedict emphasises the contingency of life, since 'it is in cultural life as it is in speech; selection is the prime necessity'.⁷⁹⁸ The 'necessity' involves creating a code possible to crack: 'each language must make its selection and abide by it on pain of not being intelligible at all'.⁷⁹⁹ Intelligibility is one of the prime constraints on autobiographical memory; in fashioning an autobiographical memory, one is creating a coherent narrative. Gillian Cohen notes that

⁷⁹³Katherine Nelson and Robyn Fivush, 'The Emergence of Autobiographical Memory: A Social Cultural Developmental Theory', *Psychological Review*, 111.2 (2004): 486-511 (p. 486).

⁷⁹⁴Wang, 'Culture and the Development of Self-Knowledge', p. 185.

⁷⁹⁵Robyn Fivush and Patricia J. Bauer, 'The Emergence of Recollection: How We Learn to Recall Ourselves in the Past', in *The Act of Remembering: Toward an Understanding of How We Recall the Past*, ed. by John H. Mace (Chichester; Maiden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 259-83 (p. 266).

⁷⁹⁶Fivush and Bauer, 'The Emergence of Recollection', p. 268.

⁷⁹⁷Fivush and Bauer, 'The Emergence of Recollection', p. 266.

⁷⁹⁸Benedict, *Patterns of Culture*, p. 23.

⁷⁹⁹Benedict, *Patterns of Culture*, p. 23.

We are continuously confronted with strange faces [...] We are bombarded with written and spoken verbal information almost every waking moment. The result is that in modern urban society the memory system is grossly overloaded.
[...] To cope with this overload the system must be selective.⁸⁰⁰

From the quotidian experiences listed, certain ones are pre-selected as more valuable to culture, but however it is considered, selection is one of the necessities of the memory system. Not to select would render one like Luria's patient, S, or Funes the Memorious.⁸⁰¹ As William James points out, 'If we remembered everything, we should on most occasions be as ill off as if we remembered nothing'.⁸⁰² Though perhaps viewed negatively by poets, selectivity is an adaptive function of memory, 'the very keel on which our mental ship is built'.⁸⁰³ However, the fact that selectivity and, therefore, loss are necessary features of memory does not make this truth easier to bear, as seen in the poetry of Hardy and Frost.

Identity as depicted in, or evoked by, Frost's poetry is at more of a remove than in Hardy. This is in part because Frost keeps his poetry more detached from his own autobiography, presenting instead character vignettes, where distinctive traits help to capture an idea of an individual.⁸⁰⁴ This seems to be how Frost remembered people in real life: writing to a friend about a walking holiday he notes 'it will give me pleasure to recall the following people we encountered', and a list of twelve people follows, such as 'The sentimental lady at the top of the Dixville Notch who wanted to think the quartz up there was early snow' (*LRF2*, 217-18). In the better received poems, Frost constructs a local legend, and uncovers how such reputations accumulate. When the reader encounters Silas ('Death') or Paul ('Paul's Wife'), because the poems are in the dramatic monologue style, it is as if a knowledge of these characters (both as larger-than-life personalities and artistic creations) is a foregone conclusion:

⁸⁰⁰Gillian Cohen, *Memory in the Real World*, p. 311.

⁸⁰¹S (Solomon Shereshevsky) is the subject of A. R. Luria's famous 1968 neuropsychological case study published in English as *The Mind of a Mnemonist*, while Funes is the protagonist of Jorge Luis Borges's 1942 short story 'Funes the Memorious' about a man who encodes and remembers every detail of his life.

⁸⁰²James, *Principles*, p. 640.

⁸⁰³James, *Principles*, p. 640.

⁸⁰⁴Indeed, 'Genealogical', about Frost's own ancestor, is more of a rhetorical performance than a personal revelation and remained unpublished in his lifetime (*CPPP*, pp. 514-16).

You know Paul could do wonders. Everyone's
Heard how he thrashed the horses on a lead
That wouldn't budge, until they simply stretched
Their rawhide harness from the load to camp.

CPPP 179

This small section shows the move from individual to collective memory which occurs in the shared memory of an individual. 'You know' both takes for granted and challenges, since if 'everyone's heard' then by default 'you', the reader, must be in the know. This technique of assumed knowledge in speech may be of Wordsworthian influence, since a similar practice is employed in 'Simon Lee':

A long blue livery-coat has he,
That's fair behind, and fair before;
Yet, meet him where you will, you see
At once that he is poor.⁸⁰⁵

Deceived by the metre into following the sense as well as the sound, the reader begins to believe that not only does s/he know of Simon Lee, but that s/he will in all likelihood 'meet him'. These fleeting literary identities might be momentarily evoked, but the versification almost vindicates them. Like Chapter 2's false recognitions, here the poems – in their conversational immediacy – engender an intimacy with people the reader has never met and who (in all likelihood) do not exist. Much of autobiographical memory is experiential, and in this simple but effective way these poems plant previous knowledge, suggest memories that can never have been created except through the reading process. It is clear that identity is not just held within the poem, but generated by the relational process of reading, both as the tale unfolds and as the reader becomes complicit in its revelation.

Frost's 'Paul's Wife' rests on the unstable signifier of the titular character's reaction to the question 'How's the wife, Paul?' (*CPPP* 178), with the poem conjecturing why this inquisition always causes Paul's departure. The line between real and invented is hard to draw, as hypotheses meet gossip to try to establish a true story (a possible oxymoron itself). The poem is based on the legendary lumberjack, Paul Bunyan – a figure famous in American culture, though not widely known among English readers. As Daniel G. Hoffman points out, this is 'one of Frost's rare

⁸⁰⁵Wordsworth and Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 105.

excursions into an American myth which he has not himself created'; this is a story already heavily layered by culture.⁸⁰⁶ Therefore, it is unsurprising that the nature of the narrative should be called into question. Just after the passage establishing knowledge of Paul comes this strange sequence:

Paul told the boss the load would be all right,
 'The sun will bring your load in' – and it did –
 By shrinking the rawhide to natural length.
 That's what is called a stretcher. But I guess
 The one about his jumping so's to land
 With both his feet at once against the ceiling,
 And then land safely right side up again,
 Back on the floor, is fact or pretty near fact.

CPPP 179

The speaker rehearses two of the Paul legends. The first is somewhat disguised, since having spoken about horses physically 'stretching' and 'shrinking the rawhide to natural length' primes the 'elastic' meaning of 'stretcher', rather than the colloquial sense of a fib. Meaning here is further confused, since the more obviously confabulated story (of gymnastic feats) is declared 'fact, or pretty near fact'. This returns to the psychologist's question of veracity: to set too much store by exact truth is to ignore what this variously told and changed tale exposes. Having selected the cultural information he deems relevant, Frost reveals more about how culture manipulates identity by overlooking veracity and focusing on those conversations which are had, rather than missing information.

The poem continues

Well, this is such a yarn. Paul sawed his wife
 Out of a white-pine leg

CPPP 179

further foregrounding its own constructedness. Memory is what you make of it, after all, and reflects Bartlett's idea of an 'effort after meaning'.⁸⁰⁷ The notion of being 'pretty near fact' with one's story or 'yarn' resonates further with the famous moment in my comparison poem, Wordsworth's 'Simon Lee'. A few stanzas from the end, the speaker addresses the reader directly:

⁸⁰⁶Robert Frost's Paul Bunyan: A Frontier Hero in New England Exile', *Midwest Folklore*, 1 (1951): 13-18 (p. 13).

⁸⁰⁷Bartlett, *Remembering*, p. 22.

My gentle reader, I perceive
How patiently you've waited,
And I'm afraid that you expect
Some tale will be related.

O reader! had you in your mind
Such stores as silent thought can bring,
O gentle reader! you would find
A tale in every thing.
What more I have to say is short,
I hope you'll kindly take it;
It is no tale; but should you think,
Perhaps a tale you'll make it.⁸⁰⁸

This recognises the cultural expectations of a narrative, and perhaps of poetry: that there will be a beginning, middle and end; some moral to take away.⁸⁰⁹ Instead, after the rich visual and sonic offerings of the preceding stanzas, the speaker promotes internal processing 'in your mind | Such stores as silent thought can bring'. Here, expectations are thwarted: not just because there 'is no tale', but because the speaker's accustomed mode of speech is overthrown. Addressed directly three times, the 'reader' cannot help but notice her/his role in 'finding' and 'making' meaning. This returns to the not-giving of Chapter 2 and Chapter 3's observations about ballads: it is 'a participative poem in which a hearer, or reader, is granted the pleasure of determining meaning from a story told largely through implication'.⁸¹⁰ No poem, perhaps, makes the reader more complicit in its remembering than 'Simon Lee': only through the reader's engagement does the poem have meaning beyond 'what more I have to say[, which] is short'.

Tales, memory and conversation also meet in Frost's 'The Exposed Nest', where the speaker remembers helping a nest of young birds with the interlocuter. Having described the narrative as one of shared experience – 'I found [...] You wanted' – yet the story has no culmination:

All this to prove we cared. Why is there then

⁸⁰⁸Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 107.

⁸⁰⁹Or, in Frost's own words, that the poem 'begins in delight and ends in wisdom' (*CPRF*, p. 132; a phrase which, though well-known, does not necessarily reflect all of Frost's own poems).

⁸¹⁰Arkans, 'Hardy's Ballad Muse', p. 143.

No more to tell? We turned to other things.
I haven't any memory – have you? –
Of ever coming to the place again

CPPP 107

The tale stalls, unable to be connected to other experiences.⁸¹¹ Like memory, experience is fragmentary and not always able to be knitted into a complete narrative. By leaving the 'you' unidentified, Frost's question leaps out at the reader, promoting her/his own recall of similar places and doings. As Pritchard notes, 'there could have been as much to "tell" as Frost [...] cared to invent. [...] to leave us and the speaker grasping for something more, is another instance of attractive realism'.⁸¹² While Pritchard's 'realism' refers to the depiction of nature, it is also a realistic depiction of remembering: memory may be limited, but can be powerfully stimulated.

These poems help illustrate Bartlett's psychological theory of memory as an 'effort after meaning'.⁸¹³ It is readerly engagement with a story that characterises the resulting narrative, and this differs depending on the background of the reader, rather than the nature of the story itself. As experimental evidence, Bartlett offers 'chains of reproductions' that participants have given in their attempts to remember certain stories.⁸¹⁴ Bartlett notes various differences between the story as remembered by his English and Indian groups, having begun the chapter by establishing that 'elements of culture, or cultural complexes, pass from person to person within a group, or from group to group [...] eventually reaching a thoroughly conventionalised form'.⁸¹⁵ Often, as the reproductions accrue, 'convention comes in again', rationalising elements of the story to better suit a subject's cultural norms.⁸¹⁶ Bartlett points out that, even in testing the individual, culture is heavy-handed in its shaping of memory. Hyman Jr.'s experiments into conversational remembering found that, in using Guy de Maupassant short stories, subjects' reported memories included

⁸¹¹'We *turned* to other things' has ominous overtones if read alongside "Out, out –" (both from *Mountain Interval*) since the speaker of 'The Exposed Nest' is musing on the birds' survival, and once the boy of "out, out –" has died, 'they, since they | Were not the one dead, *turned* to their affairs' (CPPP, p. 131, emphasis mine).

⁸¹²Pritchard, *Literary Life*, p. 153.

⁸¹³Bartlett, *Remembering*, p. 20.

⁸¹⁴Bartlett, *Remembering*, p. 171.

⁸¹⁵Bartlett, *Remembering*, p. 118.

⁸¹⁶Bartlett, *Remembering*, p. 127. For instance, in the retelling of 'The War of the Ghosts', the supernatural elements are steadily reduced in the English participants' retellings, and the mysterious 'black' thing which leaves the dying body is transformed into a more culturally appropriate departing 'soul' or 'spirit' (pp. 125-28).

‘information that encompassed their understanding of literature, society, and themselves’.⁸¹⁷ Whichever cultural frameworks are catalysed by the source material influence the resulting memory.

Given ‘Simon Lee’'s request for ‘a tale’, about a specific individual, it is noteworthy that Bartlett observes the ‘loss of individual characteristics’ when remembering stories, that ‘all the stories tend to be shorn of their individualising features’.⁸¹⁸ It is precisely this loss of the individual that worries Hardy and, to a lesser extent, Frost, their poems instead determinedly laying out a speaker's or character's individuating features. Like Middleton and Edwards' ‘mnemonic consensus’ above, the power of the group (and a given group's ideals) to shape remembering relies on streamlining narratives to a cultural best-fit. ‘Simon Lee’ might be seen as a model for autobiographical memory: what is relatable about any individual tends, on the whole, to be little; therefore, it rests with each person (or those who live on) to fashion a coherent life story out of it.

Not only does this return to Wang's notion of ‘the stories we keep’, but resonates with her more recent research in narrative analysis. Studying narrative specifically, Wang and colleagues published ‘Making Meaning Through Personal Storytelling’ in 2015. Although it looks solely at Asian Americans (and the nature of acculturation inherent within this narrating), this study shows the move away from veracity towards the more literary-cultural paradigm of the story as a studiable identity marker. Describing narrative as ‘the act of storytelling from which individuals discern meaning from experiences’, again the epistemic function of the story is stressed: narrative is not merely a rehearsal or remembering, but an act of creation.⁸¹⁹ The same issues of expectation pertain to these self-narratives as to poetic composition, with Wang asserting that ‘narrative often deals with the canonical and the exceptional’.⁸²⁰ This speaks both to the details offered in Hardy's and Frost's identity poems and to the guiding powers of (conformist) culture, which Wang suggests denotes a move away from the exceptional. Such studies as Wang's reveal the socio-cultural pre-dispositions held for constructing our own identity.

⁸¹⁷Hyman Jr., ‘Conversational Remembering’, p. 63.

⁸¹⁸Bartlett, *Remembering*, p. 173.

⁸¹⁹Qi Wang, Jessie Bee Kim Koh and Qingfang Song, ‘Meaning Making Through Personal Storytelling: Narrative Research in the Asian American Context’, *Asian American Journal of Psychology*, 6.1 (2015): 88-96 (p. 88).

⁸²⁰Wang, Koh and Song, ‘Meaning Making’, p. 89.

Now, though, I turn to those moments in Hardy's and Frost's poetry and prose when they seek to remember others: specific (real) individuals.

One Hardy poem which tells the story of a life is 'One We Knew', a poem dedicated to '(M.H. 1772-1857)' (Hardy's paternal grandmother, Mary Head) and which was formerly titled 'Remembrance'.⁸²¹ Since the poem was written in 1902, long after her death, it is an interesting exercise in remembering a specific person. While 'M. H.' has direct knowledge of historical events, such as 'the death of the King of France [...] the Terror' (275), she is also a conduit of local knowledge: the poem begins with her passing on 'how they used to form for the country dances'.⁸²² While the title emphasises the community's knowledge of 'M. H.' ('One We Knew'), the poem focuses attention on *what* she knew, the privileged insight of the (only?) 'one' able to '[show] us the post where the maypole was yearly planted' (275). The stanzas offer what could be learned from 'M. H.' and many begin 'she told', 'she spoke of', 'she showed', 'she said'.⁸²³ Since the speaker never reveals (the assumed) himself with 'I', the reader is drawn into this portrait of a memory-rich individual alongside the others of the first person plural:

With cap-framed face and long gaze into the embers –
We seated around her knees –
She would dwell on such dead themes, not as one who remembers,
But rather as one who sees.

She seemed one left behind of a band gone distant
So far that no tongue could hail:
Past things retold were to her as things existent,
Things present but as a tale. 275

While alive, M.H. ruminated on 'dead themes', purposely prioritising memory. Memory is afforded a special status, since, in M.H.'s estimation, experiences

⁸²¹Gibson notes this (*CP*, p. 274), while Gittings reveals that 'One We Knew' was published as 'Remembrance' in America (*Older Hardy*, p. 107).

⁸²²The French Revolution is a particular temporal marker for Hardy. He also uses direct memory of the Terror as a marker of age and esteem in 'Life and Death at Sunrise', with its last line "'He was ninety-odd. He could call up the French Revolution'" (p. 731). A handful of poems later, in the same collection (*Human Shows*), 'Music in a Snowy Street' depicts girls doing 'the same [dances] | That were danced in the days | Of grim Bonaparte's fame, | Or even by the toes | Of the fair Antoinette' (p. 736).

⁸²³In analysing Hardy's ballads, Norman Arkans notes that 'Hers [M. H.'s] was the first real narrative voice Hardy heard, and this picture of her surrounded by the Hardy children around the hearth ('One We Knew') rooted itself in his memory and helped to form the poet's narrative sensibility', before detailing M. H. as the source for many individual poems (p. 134).

remembered are ‘things existent’.⁸²⁴ In a reversal of the ideas above, where memory provides the story made by missing much of the present, here ‘past things’ are given the status of reality, while actual reality seems fictional, ‘a tale’: memory supposedly offers a veracity with which reality is not equipped.⁸²⁵ For ‘M. H.’, the deeper understanding is gained only in memory, while the present offers only diluted experience. This bears comparison with Hardyean recognition (in which a moment is only properly appreciated with hindsight), but without the sense of failing to understand: ‘M. H.’ believes the present to be insufficient to her, not her to it. Here selectivity, and presumably limited veracity, is not a case of cognitive deficiency but of superior memory (‘one who sees’), which keeps listeners enraptured (‘seated around her knees’).

Since Hardy here depicts family memory, ‘One We Knew’ speaks to Marianne Hirsch’s theory of postmemory, that a later generation can ‘remember’ the experiences of an older generation through storytelling, images and objects. In remembering something to which one did not bear witness, postmemory emphasises ‘imaginative investment and creation’, pertinent to Hardy.⁸²⁶ ‘Postmemory characterizes the experience who grow up dominated by the narratives that preceded their birth’, a phrase which certainly characterises part of Hardy’s experience.⁸²⁷ Hirsch reserves postmemory for traumatic memories (particularly those of the Holocaust), but it can usefully be thought of to understand how shared memories bridge the experiences of a family’s separate generations. While Hirsch notes that ‘we do not have literal “memories” of others’ experiences [... postmemory] approximates memory in its affective force and its psychic effects’.⁸²⁸ Theorists contemporaneous with Hardy, though, did suggest that memories could be inherited, that ‘Though individuals die their offspring carry on the memory of all the impressions their ancestors acquired or received’.⁸²⁹ Hardy followed such debates

⁸²⁴In this, ‘M. H.’ anticipates the figure of the 1913 ‘The Phantom Horsewoman’, who ‘sees as an instant thing | More clear than to-day, | A sweet soft scene | That was once in play [...] this vision of heretofore’ (p. 354). He, too, finds clarity in the past, not the present.

⁸²⁵This returns to the themes of hindsight and belatedness from Chapter 2, and Hardyean and Frostian revaluing of the past above the present in ‘Places’ and ‘Carpe Diem’ respectively.

⁸²⁶*Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 22.

⁸²⁷Hirsch, *Family Frames*, p. 22.

⁸²⁸*The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), p. 31.

⁸²⁹*LNTH1*, p. 168. This entry is from an article in an 1886 edition of the *Contemporary Review* where Richard Heath explains ‘Professor Ewald Hering[’s], of Prague’ theory of memory. Hardy’s literary

with interest; however, despite his poem ‘Heredity’, Hardy was not convinced by such ideas.⁸³⁰ Hirsch points out that ‘postmemory is *not* an *identity* position but a *generational* structure of transmission’, which is reflected in Hardy’s own verse: memories cannot be planted or transplanted from one person to another, but experiences can be transmitted through a dynamic and imaginative interaction.⁸³¹

Another Hardyean ‘one’, ‘M. H.’ is memory-rich in the face of a present-focused society.⁸³² She is ‘one left behind of a band gone distant’, the spatial term allowing for those moving away from the local area, as well as those now dead. The limits of voice are again underscored as this distance is ‘so far no tongue could hail’.⁸³³ One voice can only reach so far, as Chapter 3 shows, but ‘One We Knew’ projects ‘M. H.’ further by remembering her topics of conversation. Noticeably, it is a poem in which Hardy decides against direct speech: the reader can listen in on these memories but not hear them directly, again using the unsaid to mnemonic effect.

‘M. H.’ anticipates the speaker of the 1913 ‘Places’, where inversion and heavy stresses assert the speaker’s possession of the past:

Nay: one there is to whom these things,
That nobody else’s mind calls back,
Have a savour that scenes in being lack,
And a presence more than the actual brings 353

notebooks also evidence his reading of Henry Maudsley’s *Natural Causes* and thus the notion that ‘everybody [...] really recalls the experiences of his forefathers’ (*LNTHI*, p. 201).

⁸³⁰Hardy appears more interested in the inheriting of physical features, and ancestry as an abstract quality rather than the definite inheritance of given thoughts. Suzanne Keen reads ‘Heredity’ alongside ‘The Pedigree’ to show Hardy’s tendencies (*Thomas Hardy’s Brains*, pp. 120-22). See also Matthew Campbell’s reading of ‘The Pedigree’ in discussing determining forms and Hardy as a ‘mere continuator’ (*Rhythm and Will*, pp. 212-17). Angelique Richardson’s chapter usefully outlines ‘developments in hereditarian thought’ contemporary with Hardy, including Darwin and Galton among others (‘Heredity’, in *Thomas Hardy in Context*, ed. by Phillip Mallett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 328–338 (p. 328).

⁸³¹*The Generation of Postmemory*, p. 35 (original emphasis).

⁸³²The speaker of ‘In Tenebris II’ feels himself ‘one born out of due time, who has no calling here’ and ultimately is asked by the last line to ‘up and be gone as one shaped awry; he disturbs the order here’ (p. 168). In the 1896 ‘Wessex Heights’ the speaker allows the first person singular, but is similarly separate: ‘nobody thinks as I [...] everybody but me’ (p. 319). Like the woman of ‘She, to Him III’, who is ‘despised by souls of Now’ (p. 16), the speaker of ‘Wessex Heights’ makes it clear that his ‘breast beat[s] out of tune’ (p. 319) with the rest of society, not just with himself.

⁸³³In ‘A Missive Missile’, Frost similarly notes that ‘Far as we aim our signs to reach, | Far as we often make them reach [...] It cannot speak as far as this’ (*CPPP*, p. 300).

The final stanza of ‘Places’ startles the reader, if less dramatically than ‘The Voice’. Lulled by the repeated stanza openings ‘Nobody says:’, ‘Nobody thinks:’, ‘Nobody calls to mind’, s/he expects the same rhythmic unit. All of these phrases are ‘nobody remembers’ in disguise, with consequent stanzas detailing all that has been forgotten. As the final stanza proclaims the speaker’s memory, the form newly recruits the reader’s cognitive capacities by moving the punctuation to sit after the initial first-beat negation, ‘nay’, and following it with a consecutive stress to recognise that ‘one there is’ who does remember.⁸³⁴ Arrested by the unexpected rhythm and syntax, the reader is forced to reconsider the previous stanzas, becoming aware again of how much s/he has learned about this particular ‘girl of grace’.

Preferring to depict remembering individuals, Hardy also inherits a literary tradition of memorials and what the written word offers in the face of death. An impressive classical scholar, Hardy offers his own version of a Sapphic Fragment:

‘Thou shalt be – Nothing.’ – OMAR KHAYYÁM
 ‘Tombless, with no remembrance.’ – W. SHAKESPEARE

Dead shalt thou lie; and nought
 Be told of thee or thought,
 For thou hast plucked not of the Muses’ tree:
 And even in Hades’ halls
 Amidst thy fellow-thralls
 No friendly shade thy shade shall company! 181

‘Nothing’, ‘no’, ‘nought’ – the poem imagines a bleak prospect. This loss, for Sappho, is contingent on having ‘plucked not of the Muses’ tree’: the arts, it is implied, could offer some protection against being forgotten. Like Horace, immortalised in his better-than-brass verse, this fragment’s speaker sees death as absolute and condemnatory, if ‘nought | Be told of thee or thought’. Much like the Puddletown churchyard note and ‘Lizbie Browne’, there is a shift in agency after death: you have responsibility to create something in life which can then be ‘told of’ by others after your death. Again, identity passes from self to other, to circulate (or

⁸³⁴Matthew Campbell notes that ‘tripe and duple feet are interchanged throughout “Places” with a restlessness of metre [...] timing his grief in with the rhythms of a ghost’s voice’ (*Rhythm and Will*, p. 221). Campbell’s reading focuses more on the speaker’s submission to the metre, whereas I look at the final assertion of attention over metre (pp. 221-32).

not) in the local community. However, contesting ‘Sappic Fragment’'s message, it is precisely to ‘telling’, to relating stories, that Hardy’s poems are so dedicated.

‘Sapphic Fragment’ concerns artistic memorials, rather than a discrete marker of identity, but a locus of mnemonic concern for Hardy is physical memorials, to which the Shakespearean epigraph more specifically refers. Hardy’s poem ‘Sacred to the Memory’, written on the death of his sister, Mary, argues the problem of enclosing one’s memory of, and love for, an individual within the brief lines of an epitaph:

That ‘Sacred to the Memory’
Is clearly carved there I own,
And all may think that on the stone
The words have been inscribed by me
In bare conventionality.

They know not and will never know
That my full script is not confined
To that stone space, but stands deep lined
Upon the landscape high and low
Wherein she made such worthy show. 671

There is a divide in the stanzas between ‘I’ and ‘them’, individual and collective knowledge, illustrating the problem with which this chapter engages: ‘How does memory transmit between these two very different repositories?’. The speaker keeps himself distant from other mourners since ‘They know not and will never know’, this gravestone serves no epistemic function to estimate either ‘her’ worth or the speaker’s emotion. Though ‘clearly carved’, seeing this message does not translate to understanding. Nor will Hardy adhere to mnemonic conventions: disparaging the tradition of the epitaph, the tone is almost bitter, as the syllables of ‘conventionality’ dominate the space of the metrical line.⁸³⁵ In contrast, Wordsworth when debates the ‘sincerity’ of an epitaph, ‘the uniform language of these memorials’ is not necessarily negative, though it appears to pain Hardy.⁸³⁶ Consigning his memory to the landscape instead, Hardy still concludes in terms of the textual: it is the ‘full

⁸³⁵Compare the line ‘With equanimity’ (p. 81) from the more famous ‘I Look Into My Glass’ where Hardy uses the same technique of polysyllabic encumbrance.

⁸³⁶Wordsworth, ‘Essays Upon Epitaphs’, p. 71 (for his discussion of ‘sincerity’); p. 65 (for the quotation given). Furthermore, ‘Essay III’ begins by stating that the second essay was designed to help the reader in separating truth and sincerity from falsehood and affectation’ (p. 82).

script' of his memory that cannot be read on the gravestone. Furthermore, 'That stone space' is not just falsifiable (as many other Hardy poems depict), but subject to natural destruction.⁸³⁷ As Frost's 'Ghost House' admits, 'Those stones out under the low-limbed tree | Doubtless bear names that the mosses mar' (*CPPP* 16). The ready monument to his sister is unacceptable to Hardy, with his memory of Mary's identity 'not confined' to its physical form and extending beyond its prompt.

With Mary dying in 1915, 'The Monument-Maker' (dated 1916) is a continuation of the same argument. The titular character works diligently to perfect 'her monument' only for it to be 'scorned, almost' by her spirit: "'It spells not me! [...] Tells nothing about my beauty, wit or gay time'" (707). Again, the physical monument is devalued as an identity marker for its limitations and inability to 'tell' a livelier narrative. Epitaphs are by their nature partial, but Hardy fears the appropriateness of this medium at all. The list offered by the spirit in 'The Monument-Maker' is an index of the anxiety about posthumous identity. Wordsworth offers an alternative list: 'particular thoughts, actions, images,— circumstances of age, occupation, manner of life, prosperity which the deceased had known, or adversity to which he had been subject', in order that those present may be appropriately moved.⁸³⁸ 'A distinct and clear conception [...] of the individual lamented' should be given, claims (and repeats) Wordsworth, but this is precisely what is felt to be missing in both of these Hardy poems.

Crucially, Wordsworth's sentence continues 'as [...] it appeared to those who loved him and lament his loss': this is a composite version of the 'individual lamented' as understood by the group, not the deceased her/himself. As 'The Monument-Maker' shows, survivors can mistake the deceased's identity. Where Wordsworth and Hardy part company in their thinking about posthumous identity, then, is in this relationship between the (dead) individual and the group: for Wordsworth, it is natural and apt that a memorial should translate into something for the community. His 'Essays' begin with the idea that an epitaph is 'a tribute due to

⁸³⁷Gravestones are a site of moral questioning for Hardy, not just because of their scant text (as in 'Sacred') but in terms of where they are placed ('My Spirit Shall Not Haunt the Mound', 'I Found Her Out There', 'Her Haunting Ground'), whether they are visited ('Your Last Drive', 'The Death of Regret', 'Regret Not Me') and how they are obscured by weathering ('Rain on a Grave', 'During Wind and Rain', 'The Obliterate Tomb'). Graves can also falsify the narrative of a life, as Hardy explores in 'The Memorial Brass: 186-', in which a widow has had her own name and faithfulness monumentalised, causing her an emotional dilemma when she remarries.

⁸³⁸Wordsworth, 'Essays Upon Epitaphs', p. 57.

his individual worth, for a satisfaction to the sorrowing hearts of the survivors, and for the common benefit of the living'.⁸³⁹ Hardy, instead, seeks to maintain the sanctity of this 'individual worth', seeing all too well how such a 'mnemonic consensus' (to borrow an earlier phrase) from a group irons out those features felt to be most precious by the person in question.

Frost displays a more detached interest in how people are talked about in their absence (whether through physical absence or death), looking at what of your identity exists in a social sphere beyond your physical presence. In life, this can be seen in the words someone writes in memory of a lost friend. Once established as a writer, Frost was called upon to provide obituaries about other professional writers, but here I look back at two early memorial addresses. The first is the 'Dedication of the Davison Memorial Library (1930), from Chapter 3. Frost cites the motivation for the address as 'I want him to be personally remembered' (*CPRF* 100). It is unclear to whom 'personally' refers: to remembered man (Davison), or remembering man (Frost)? Either this is about remembering a man's individual character, or it is to establish Frost's own claim to a specific wealth of memory.⁸⁴⁰ 'Personally' allows for both readings, but the latter might be better supported by the opening of Frost's address:

I owe a debt to Wilfred Davison that I can't tell you about. It's between him and me. I didn't get a chance to tell him about it. He went away before we could talk it over.
CPRF 100

Again, Frost holds back from revealing information; the memory rests partially on something unknown. That 'it's between him and me', makes the 'personally' Frost's specialised domain. Speech is also emphasised: 'to tell him', 'before we could talk it over'. This real-life occurrence mirrors Hardy's 'things left unsaid' of 'Not Only I'. It is a commonplace that it is the dead's misfortune not to hear their own eulogies: death prompts the saying of all the things left unsaid about a person during their life.

Frost notes that Davison wrote 'about the influence which passed through him to others', but goes on to remark, 'I don't care very much for the influence that merely passes through him. That's all right, too; but I want him to be personally

⁸³⁹Wordsworth, 'Essays Upon Epitaphs', p. 53.

⁸⁴⁰I use 'wealth' because Frost has cultural currency as a rememberer-memorialiser, due to his literary fame: his memories are publicly valued.

remembered' (*CPRF* 100). 'Personally' becomes 'specific to this individual', since Frost wants Davison to be more than a conduit for a more general influence; remembering Davison involves extracting something characteristic for Frost.⁸⁴¹ The Davison poem to which Frost refers (reprinted with Frost's address) is reproduced in Richardson's notes: 'My monument be what of living truth | Has flowed through me to other men. | So shall survive what is of lasting worth. | Thus though I die, then shall I live again' (*CPRF* 270). Even this excerpt comments on the selection process of cultural memory, that what survives 'is of lasting worth': those things of most value for continuation are selected for keeping. Davison's self-awareness about his role in the grand scheme of society is poignant, setting himself within a larger memorial context and accepting the loss as necessary.

The second memorial address under consideration is Frost's 1920 'Address in Memory of J. Warner Fobes' – for not a famous person, but Frost's neighbour and friend. As Richardson notes, this speech was entitled 'A Friend's Memory' in the booklet for the remembrance service (*CPRF* 262). It is a personal account of an individual, but even here cultural categories compromise any truly individual sense of identity. As Frost says, 'it was as farmers we met, and it was as farmer to farmer we exhibited our qualities' (*CPRF* 82). Later, Frost claims 'the best of generosity is courage. Mr. Fobes showed it as preacher, soldier, citizen, and hunter' (83), aligning Fobes with several group memberships but not revealing much of him as an individual. It is only at the end of the address that Fobes is given some specificity:

Between our houses on the side of Sugar Hill there was a tunnel road of white birches. I shall always see it alight away ahead at night with the headlights of the car as we went back and forth on the errands of friendship in the long summers we both made of it up there.

CPRF 83

As with Davison, Frost does not provide intimate details: the nature of these 'errands of friendship' is between him and Fobes. However, for the first time the audience (now reader) has the sense of Fobes' identity as an individual with friends, places with which he is associated, times in which he lived. While 'preacher, soldier,

⁸⁴¹The idea of passing on influence has been discussed by existential psychologist Irwin D. Yalom as the 'rippling effect'. He describes this as referring to the fact that 'each of us creates – often without our conscious intent or knowledge – concentric circles of influence that may affect others for years, even generations' (*Staring at the Sun: Overcoming the Dread of Death* (London: Hachette Digital, 2008), p. 83).

citizen, and hunter' could come from any time, Fobes is now temporally and spatially located, as well as through his association with Frost. Once again, it is seen that identity is relational, consisting of links between the speaker and the subject.

Hardy, too, was called upon as a rememberer of great men upon their passing. He contributed to collected remembrances of both Robert Louis Stevenson and George Meredith.⁸⁴² In his memories of one friend, Hardy comes across as someone for whom remembering is both a pastime and a pleasure, since 'my first distinct recollection of Henry Moule carries me back, through a long avenue of years, towards the middle of the last century. His figure emerges from the obscurity of forgotten and half-forgotten things somewhere between 1856 and 1860'.⁸⁴³ Being 'carried back' is also the experience of Hardy's remembering speaker in 'She, to Him II' when 'some other's feature, accent, thought like mine, | Will carry you back to what I used to say' (15). Perhaps most similar to Frost's addresses is Hardy's memory of Barnes, published in *The Athenaeum*. While offering a physical description of Barnes, Hardy also depicts his weekly visits to Dorchester, noting that Barnes seemed 'to be thinking of matters which had nothing to do with the scene before him' and recreating 'the invariable first act of his market visit':

Halting here, opposite the public clock, he would pull his old-fashioned watch from its deep fob, and set it with great precision to London time.⁸⁴⁴

Once again, only those distinguishing features are retold, making it firmly 'his market visit' rather than anybody else's. Displaying the emphasis on selfhood which cross-cultural studies show to be characteristic of Euro-American cultures, Hardy offers Barnes' independence, rather than depicting his interconnectedness with Dorset society.

I have emphasised Hardy's valuing of individual identity over Frost's, because for Hardy individuation is a characteristic and a career-long aim of his work. One critic classifies a story as characteristic of Hardy on the basis of 'its evident respect for the value of the individual's identity', and another notes that even in the

⁸⁴²The full texts of these can be found in *Thomas Hardy's Personal Writings*: 'Robert Louis Stevenson' pp. 149-151 and 'G.M.: A Reminiscence', pp. 151-155. Hardy also wrote a poem entitled 'George Meredith' on Meredith's passing (*CP*, pp. 297-98).

⁸⁴³This is from Hardy's preface to *Dorchester Antiquities* by H. J. Moule, qtd. in *Thomas Hardy's Personal Writings*, p. 66.

⁸⁴⁴'The Rev. William Barnes, B. D.', qtd. in *Thomas Hardy's Personal Writings*, p. 100.

Chorus of *The Dynasts*, ‘Hardy individuated each member of the group’.⁸⁴⁵ Hardy resists the power of the group to incorporate individuals and thereby dissolve their individual identities.

Part of this comes from reading John Stuart Mill’s ‘Of Individuality’ from *On Liberty*, which Hardy numbered among his ‘cures for despair’.⁸⁴⁶ Mill’s essay determines ‘It is not by wearing down into uniformity all that is individual in themselves, but by cultivating it and calling it forth [...] that human beings become a noble and beautiful object of contemplation’.⁸⁴⁷ In linking Mill and Hardy, Philip Davis selects the passage about character, that ‘A person whose desires and impulses are his own – are the expression of his own nature, as it has been developed and modified by his own culture – is said to have a character’.⁸⁴⁸ Applicable to Hardy, yes, but Mill’s parenthetical insertion again reveals the shaping hand of culture from which individuality cannot escape.

Having corresponded with John Addington Symonds in the early 1890s, Hardy copied out Symonds’ comments on individual identity from the *Essays*, noting that ‘even the commonest people have, each of them, a specific style’.⁸⁴⁹ Moreover, Wordsworth argues in ‘Essays Upon Epitaphs’ that ‘every man has a character of his own, to the eye that has skill to perceive it’.⁸⁵⁰ Hardy echoes such sentiments in ‘The Dorsetshire Labourer’, mentioned in Chapter 3, which rails against the use of ‘Hodge’ as a nickname because, as the opening sentence asserts, it is not ‘indicative of the individuals composing that class’.⁸⁵¹ In many ways a defence of individual identity, the essay encourages the reader to seek out such labourers and talk to them, whereupon it is found that he is ‘somehow not typical of anyone but himself’.⁸⁵² All of this, though, rests upon the individual being ‘personally known’, exactly the kind of relationship which Hardy’s poems seek to cultivate.

⁸⁴⁵Rosemary Sumner, *Thomas Hardy: Psychological Novelist* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1981), p.27; Suzanne Keen, *Thomas Hardy’s Brains*, p.197.

⁸⁴⁶See Hardy, *Life*, p. 59 and Davis, *Memory and Writing*, p. 362. Wordsworth’s ‘Resolution and Independence’ is also listed as a ‘cure’.

⁸⁴⁷John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and The Subjection of Women*, ed. by Alan Ryan (London: Penguin, 2006), pp. 71-72.

⁸⁴⁸Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 69; Davis, *Memory and Writing*, p. 362.

⁸⁴⁹*LNTH2*, p. 38. This is part of a longer quotation Hardy takes from Symonds’s *Essays, Speculative and Suggestive*, originally published in 1890.

⁸⁵⁰Wordsworth, ‘Essays Upon Epitaphs’, p. 56.

⁸⁵¹Qtd. in *Thomas Hardy’s Personal Writings*, p. 168.

⁸⁵²Qtd. in *Thomas Hardy’s Personal Writings*, p. 170. As Anna West points out, the trajectory of this thought continues into a famous passage from *Tess*, when Angel Clare is surprised that ‘At close

Returning to my epigraph for this chapter, one character who knows all too well the loss inscribed within handing over one's voice is Hamlet. Knowing that with death comes 'silence', Hamlet uses his final moments to ensure the legacy of his tale, leaving it to his proxy, Horatio:

Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me!
 If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart
 Absent thee from felicity awhile
 And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
 To tell my story. 5.2.329-33

Hardy marks these lines in his copy of *Hamlet*, suggesting that this narrative predicament is one which he took seriously.⁸⁵³ The story of an identity is never complete, but when it is handed over to another person, becomes even less so: 'my story' exists in a version different from 'your story of me'. As Hardy's 'Not Only I' shows, a great deal more exists beyond the physical tokens a person leaves behind. Those memories which are created via the narrative of a person might not be the most accurate, but they perhaps offer the greater insight into, as is commonly said, 'what s/he was *really* like.'

Imagined identities

thou has been [...]
 A man, that fortune's buffets and rewards
 Hast ta'en with equal thanks: and bless'd are those,
 Whose blood and judgment are so well co-mingled,
 That they are not a pipe for fortune's finger
 To sound what stop she please.

– *Hamlet*, III ii⁸⁵⁴

In his copy of *Hamlet*, Hardy wrote 'Character of Thomas Hardy Sen' – Died July 20 1892 T.H. junior' in the margin next to the above lines (about Horatio).

'Character' has a double meaning here since presumably this description fits Hardy Senior's characteristics, but also aligns him with the role of a fictional character, an

quarters, no Hodge was to be seen' (Hardy, *Tess*, p. 117; *Thomas Hardy and Animals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), Chapter 6, forthcoming). (West also points out that the *Tess* passage is indebted to Gray's 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard' (stanza 15) and *Macbeth* (V v)).

⁸⁵³Dennis Taylor, 'Hardy's Copy of *Hamlet*', p. 112.

⁸⁵⁴Dennis Taylor, 'Hardy's Copy of *Hamlet*', p. 105.

invented identity. Hardy channels the remembered identity of his father through literature, tying the memory of one individual to a play deeply embedded in cultural memory.⁸⁵⁵ For all that this falls back on a pre-made cultural memory, remembering his father as someone whom this description fits is high, and personal, praise. Hardy chooses to value something recognisably entrenched within culture, yet endows it with the personal meaning which can both recapture and extend the memory of his father.

Just as memory itself is a reconstructive process, identity is about constructing and re-constructing a narrative both during an individual's life and afterwards. I have called this conclusion 'imagined identities', but perhaps 'invented identities' would be closer to the mark, since identity is the product of invention: a purposeful collating of salient information to form a coherent – and desired – whole.⁸⁵⁶ Indeed, *inventio* and *memoria* are sister canons within Classical rhetoric. Kurt Danziger notes that in the legal arenas of Roman society 'memory served invention', since 'for the Roman lawyer or orator the art of memory was valued less as an aid to verbatim reproduction than as an aid to finding the right forms for influencing a live audience while addressing them'.⁸⁵⁷ Philosopher Mary Warnock has also highlighted the fact that memory and imagination 'overlap and cannot be wholly distinguished. Both consist in thinking of things in their absence', including the individuals with whom Hardy's and Frost's poetry deals.⁸⁵⁸ This denotation of 'imagining' is also vindicated by Bartlett, who summarises his theory of remembering with the assurance that 'remembering is not the re-excitation of innumerable fixed, lifeless and fragmentary traces. It is an imaginative reconstruction, or construction, built of the relation of our attitude towards a whole active mass of organised past reactions or experience, and to a little outstanding detail which commonly appears in image or in language form'.⁸⁵⁹ Like Frost's 'imagining ear' from Chapter 3, these poets foreground imagination which – though it may seem a case of poetic licence – is inherent to memory.

⁸⁵⁵Hamlet is not the only literary text which Hardy infused with his father's memory. According to biographer Martin Seymour-Smith, 'Tom wrote "T.H. (Sen.)" at the top of the famous Ode 22 (1st book) in his copy of Horace, with perhaps not only the first lines, but the whole poem, in mind' (Hardy, p. 458).

⁸⁵⁶My title pays homage to Benedict Anderson's great work *Imagined Communities*, rev edn (London; New York: Verso, 1991), which shows how memory is implicated in the formation of nations.

⁸⁵⁷*Marking the Mind: A History of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 189.

⁸⁵⁸Mary Warnock, (*Memory* (London; Boston: Faber, 1987), p. 12.

⁸⁵⁹Bartlett, *Remembering*, p. 213.

Remembering identity is less to do with facts, or ‘memory’ as a concrete noun, than with the socio-cultural process of remembering and how one interacts with memory media. Memory, rather than establishing a monument – or anything durable in a unified form – is a means of engagement with identity, and the poem the vehicle for this meeting. While Horace’s poems might have been ‘more lasting than brass’, Hardy endeavours that people continue to speak of him ‘Afterwards’, that the greater resonances of the departed ‘I’ continue to have effect. As Frost writes to Louis Untermeyer, ‘My ambition has been to have it said of me He made a few connections’ (*LRF2* 645). In a Western society that values the individual and in an age that had seen a terrific loss of life (and many individuals go unrecorded), these poems – which ask that the more ephemeral facets of identity be intuited by readers and speakers – are covertly powerful.

Using the illustrative figure of the soldier (often at the centre of debates about memorial culture), Frost’s sonnet ‘A Soldier’ considers the problem of the lack of memory cues in death. The opening lines posit a metaphor which replaces person with relic:

He is that fallen lance that lies as hurled,
That lies unlifted now, come dew, come rust,
But still lies pointed as it plowed the dust. *CPPP* 240

Deceptively straight-forward, the poem in fact asks that the way objects and situations are read be reconsidered. That this lance ‘lies as hurled’ seems authentic, as if it has not been tampered with, yet this single lance – without its identifying context – is merely one cue, one clue, in understanding a larger situation. The triple repetition of ‘lies’ solicits the alternative meaning of falsity, or at least possible deception. Not sorrowful, the poem nonetheless has an undercurrent of loss, since figuratively to lie ‘unlifted now, come dew, come rust’ is to be ignored and forgotten (‘still lies’ also recalling the motionless corpse in death). The changing of the seasons from elegiac tradition is here reimaged in the weathering of the metal. Frost emphasises the problem of how one’s eyes read the world, since the poem continues

If we who sight along it round the world,
See nothing worthy to have been its mark,
It is because like men we look too near,

Forgetting that as fitted to the sphere,
Our missiles always make too short an arc. *CPPP 240*

To 'sight' and 'see' is not necessarily to understand, because that obscures the wider context. The fault of misreading here is from looking 'too near' and failing to recognise the holistic circumstances which envelop this scene. While Frost here uses 'forgetting' in a specific context, it works to express the attempted understanding remembering should offer. Remembering here would be to 'see' a rounded narrative of identity, rather than fixate on a single relic. There is a memory paradox in this poem: 'looking near' suggests detailed study, yet there is a missing dimension, since this looks close but misses the personal, the characteristics of this anonymous soldier which would more fully suggest his identity. To return to Aristotle and his hierarchy of recognition in the *Poetics*, the 'least artistic' method of anagnorsis is 'recognition by marks or tokens'.⁸⁶⁰ Useful cues as physical tokens are, recognitions that 'use tokens as proofs of identity' are disparaged by Aristotle for lacking 'invention'. Notably, Aristotle's highest ranking recognition are those of 'a composite kind' and second highest, those 'through reasoning'.⁸⁶¹ Combining this with my own argument about mnemonic effort, a certain amount of cognitive work needs doing to flesh out a person's identity. Invention, imagination, is an important co-author in remembering someone's life, because it allows for the unverifiable, the ephemeral and, ultimately, the most personal details to come back. As Frost ends his sonnet,

But this we know, the obstacle that checked
And tripped the body, shot the spirit on
Further than target ever showed or shone. *CPPP 240*

Like his enjambed penultimate line, the reader – like the rememberer – needs to go beyond the present remnants 'shown' and enlarge the vista to embrace the imagined identity, and the less tangible resonances of what 'shone'.

As in their concentration on voice, Hardy and Frost chase identity's ephemera, the short-lived and those features which the memory system is incapable of retaining in all their detail. That which psychology might term 'selectivity' (an adaptive function of an overtaxed system), is in poetry more likely to be experienced

⁸⁶⁰ Aristotle, *Poetics*, p. 61.

⁸⁶¹ Aristotle, *Poetics*, p. 62.

as ‘loss’. Hardy’s and Frost’s poetic memories do not even need an actual loss: ‘Afterwards’ turns on the projected loss of the speaker’s own life. Hardy and Frost focus the reader’s attention on an individual’s most intrinsic features – those which, by necessity, are most difficult to replicate or represent – though, like Chapter 2’s belatedness, such recognitions of identity tend to come (in these poems) after the death of the remembered subject. These are the sorts of characteristics that others can only conjecture about even when the person is present.

Loss informs Hardy’s and Frost’s poetic remembrances of person(s) absent, yet this only encourages their imaginative avenues. The focal identifying features are those about which one would say such inexact things as “I get the feeling s/he is...”; indeed, it is this sort of conversational cadence which ‘Afterwards’ echoes. Hardy and Frost urge readers to continue conversing about people past, to use those cultural frameworks already in place to not preserve, but commune with those identities being lost. These conversational poems make reading an act of remembrance, ensuring that there is an ‘afterwards’ to talk about.

CONCLUSION –

A Balancing Act

‘We are on safest ground with things remembered’
Robert Frost, notebook entry⁸⁶²

Thomas Hardy and Robert Frost demonstrate the mnemonics of verse: this thesis has shown how their poetry not only enacts human memory processes, but extends cognitive and cultural capabilities, offering a richness of memory that would not otherwise be possible. Beyond an admiration for ‘How things linger!’ in Hardy’s and Frost’s poetry, I have explored *how* this is done. The ‘balance’ to which the title refers is the balance between being memorable enough without being too memorable: memory, it seems, has a touch of Goldilocks’ fastidiousness. Poetry needs to be expected yet novel, mix the familiar and the unknown, offer some fixity to the ephemeral and negotiate the interplay between the individual and society. Given the difficulty of keeping the balance between two forces in the creation of a memorable poem, it is impressive that both Hardy and Frost managed (albeit with exceptions) to pen such enduring verse. In the midst of these magnetic forces, Hardy’s and Frost’s poetry also insists on recalling the past, while calling forwards to future readers. Their keenness to recapture the past might have begun as a virtue of their historical placement, witnesses to the turn of the century, but each poet also made it into a personal virtue of his poetry.

Rather than just leaving a ‘record’, this thesis has argued that Hardy’s and Frost’s poetry offers spurs to the memory and stimulates remembering without necessarily offering easily assimilable memories. Before I offer a general discussion of my findings, three overarching features from across all of the chapters have proven particularly germane to Hardyean and Frostian memory: form, ambiguity and individuation. The careful combination of these provides their poetry with the balance necessary for (the right kind of) memorability.

‘Catchiness has a lot to do with it’, declared Frost in an interview, and Chapter 1 looked at the ways in which formal verse is cognitively ‘catchy’.⁸⁶³ Frost claims this is true ‘from the ballads you hear on the street to the lines in Shakespeare

⁸⁶²MS 1428, Notebook 1912, 10f.

⁸⁶³Qtd. in *Robert Frost on Writing*, p. 155.

[...] You don't have to try to remember them. It's from the way they're said'.⁸⁶⁴ This statement encapsulates Frost's love of the speaking voice, and his alignment of the literary and colloquial worlds. However, that which Frost characterises as effortless ('you don't have to try') is borne of the poet's craft: 'It's from the way they're said'. The introduction of variation upon a set pattern, so crucial to memorability, suggests this vocal posture counterbalances what is naturally 'catchy'. 'Catchiness' cannot refer simply to strict metre: Hardy's 'Memory and I' does not appear in this thesis because it is too formulaic to be memorable, or to reveal anything about Hardy's memory.⁸⁶⁵ Throughout, this thesis has foregrounded the importance of ambiguity to poetic memory, since ambiguity stimulates further thinking, and further processing. It also allows imagination to be an important – furthering rather than falsifying – co-author of remembering, much as the reader is encouraged to become co-author of these poetic memories. At the end of his 'Essays Upon Epitaphs', Wordsworth relates an anecdote which establishes less is more when it comes to being remembered:

In an obscure corner of a Country Church-yard I once espied, half-overgrown with Hemlock and Nettles, a very small Stone laid upon the ground, bearing nothing more than the name of the Deceased with the date of birth and death, importing that it was an Infant which had been born one day and died the following. I know not how far the Reader may be in sympathy with me, but more awful thoughts of rights conferred, of hopes awakened, of remembrances stealing away or vanishing were imparted to my mind by that Inscription there before my eyes than by any other that it has ever been my lot to meet with upon a Tomb-stone.⁸⁶⁶

Although, in this case it is 'awful thoughts' (because it concerns the death of a child), Wordsworth focuses on what the text 'imports' rather than says explicitly. This thesis has demonstrated that Hardy's and Frost's poetry of memory – as opposed to memorisation or psychological testing – helps the reader to develop memories by routing the reader towards remembering for her/himself.

⁸⁶⁴Qtd. in *Robert Frost on Writing*, p. 155.

⁸⁶⁵'Memory and I' personifies 'Memory' in order that the speaker and Memory can have an antiphonal about where the speaker's 'youth [...] joy [...] hope [...] faith [...] and] love' have gone (pp. 185-86).

⁸⁶⁶Wordsworth, 'Essays Upon Epitaphs', p. 93.

Frost's statement in the above epigraph is jovially disingenuous: there is nothing 'safe' about the ground of 'things remembered'. This thesis has also shown the fragility of memory, even when it lives within robust metrical forms. The psychological scaffolding which this project uses makes clear memory's failings at the point of encoding, let alone at the point of recall. The previous chapters displayed the purposeful and the accidental – by which I mean unconscious – skewing of memory towards emphasising certain aspects at the expense of others (Chapter 2), or the forgetting of individual details (Chapter 4). Yet for all this, poetic memory continues to give life to things long since lost.

On December 17, 1915, Frost received a letter from the writer Willa Cather, thanking him 'for the pleasure of admiring your verse, which is "new" enough and which yet contains so many of the oldest elements of poetry': her praise is rooted in the mixing of old and new.⁸⁶⁷ I assume that one of the most obvious 'old elements' that Frost was using, in 1915, was metre. I have been at pains to stress Hardy's and Frost's use of traditional metrical forms throughout this thesis, as the importance of this feature cannot be underestimated in encouraging the memorability of their poetry: the apparatus of the verse form itself is hugely influential in the memorability of Hardy's and Frost's respective poetry, since 'the one thing that sets poetry in traditional verse forms apart from any other kind is the fact that it is mnemonic'.⁸⁶⁸ Isolating this feature from the overall effect of their verse, one can also see that this provides Hardy and Frost with the 'resistant structure' which Aleida Assman sees as necessary for texts which wish to remain in the cultural archive.⁸⁶⁹ Part of the endurance of Hardy's and Frost's poetry lies in the durability of these metrical forms.

Speaking from the other end of the expectancy debate, on August 7, 1916, Frost was in receipt of a letter about the title of his upcoming collection (*Mountain Interval*). Charles P. G. Scott pointed out that 'it is the mark of a poet to choose titles and words that are distinctive, or that make his own special thought distinct and rememberable tomorrow. The moment he chooses, or avoids, the unusual because it is unusual, or chooses the trite because that happens to be in fashion, he chooses the

⁸⁶⁷This is from *LRF1*, p. 414, fn. 347.

⁸⁶⁸Gronas, *Cognitive Poetics and Cultural Memory*, p. 97.

⁸⁶⁹Aleida Assman, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization*, p. 337.

road of Safety first – and Oblivion soon after’.⁸⁷⁰ Daring to be unique affords the poet distinction both in terms of being different from others and valuable enough to be ‘rememberable tomorrow’. Scott asserts that poetry which can, and will, last, does not fear the unusual, nor is it a slave to external ‘fashions’. The Georgians’ safer experiments with poetry in the early twentieth century led if not to oblivion then a fair amount of forgetting; the free versifiers discarding of rhyme and metre means that while their poetry might emblazon images upon the reader’s mind, remembering exact lines or stanzas is challenging. Despite Scott’s imagery, the poet does not choose either the road of Safety or of Oblivion, but attempts a happy medium in order to remain among those texts which continue to be read. The local expectancy effects explored in Chapter 1 begin the process of memory by recruiting attention, directing perception and ultimately ushering certain words and phrases towards being encoded into the memory system.

Chapter 2 demonstrated how memory offers an enlarged experience of the present after the fact: in remembering, the past is re-negotiated in the current present, providing new dimensions to the experience of a moment now past. If hindsight has the ability to reveal more details than those known at the time, then poetry allows memories to be relived in real-time, with more depth and richness than they were originally experienced. Since the reader, as much as the speaker of a given Hardy or Frost poem, also undergoes this experience of recognition, both poets also emphasise the importance of the reader in creating this mnemonic experience. While the reader’s cognitive assets are recruited by the form, as Chapter 1 showed, the mnemonic content of such poems asks for a more conscious awareness of the act of remembering.

Chapter 3 highlighted the mnemonic possibilities of voice, not just for its relation to everyday life, or its immediacy, but also for its ability to remind one of someone lost, to evoke a larger experience from this auditory stimulus. In this way, both Hardy and Frost place renewed value on the ephemera of sound and, particularly, voice. Hardy and Frost prove poetry to be a genre peculiarly receptive to, and indicative of, the voice, able to recuperate those memories which humans are not adaptively programmed to retain. ‘Memories are the least material of

⁸⁷⁰*LRF1*, pp. 481-82 (original emphasis). Interestingly, given his influence on Frost, ‘Even Wordsworth, who was a great Pedestrian, used some words that were not of the common of garden kind’ is Scott’s next phrase (*LRF1*, p. 482).

possessions' wrote Frost in a notebook.⁸⁷¹ So, too, though, are sounds and voices. In relying on the ephemeral (the spoken) to inspire a further intangible entity (memory), Hardy and Frost keep their presentations of memory all the less able to be grasped, but equally more evocative, and enabled for readerly engagement.

I focused on voice where other Hardy scholars place attention on the phrase (and title of his 1917 collection) 'moments of vision'. However, what Hughes understands about Hardy's 'visionary moments' is also applicable to the use of voice and the recognitions that Hardy depicts:

the intense emotion that attends the registration of facts opens up alternative possibilities of value and the ideal. Like music, the poems offer expansions of thought and sympathy, working through the manifold and elliptical promptings of feeling rather than through merely cognitive certainties⁸⁷²

While Hughes writes primarily about music, and does not engage with psychology, he notes that Hardy's poetry is not simply a matter of 'cognitive certainties' but something more resonant. 'Elliptical promptings' is a good description of what both Hardy and Frost offer in terms of both recognitions and voice: nothing is given in secure form, but is purposely incomplete and a prompt to the reader.

In their use of ballads and representing local inflections of speech, both Hardy and Frost link voice with particular regions and give specificity to their versified memories. Praising Frost for balancing linguistic opposites, O'Donnell notes that 'Part of Frost's genius with idiom is a matter of correct timing, of knowing exactly when to introduce a colloquial, conversational phrase so as to counterbalance a passage composed in the less idiomatic language of standard literary English'.⁸⁷³ For O'Donnell, the poetry is improved by leaning on the 'colloquial'.

These poetic depictions of conversation form the basis of identity, as Chapter 4 showed. This chapter shared Chapter 3's interest in locality, seeing it as mnemonically binding. By eavesdropping onto conversations, and having reading bear witness to conversations in progress, Hardy and Frost show the level of detail that common parlance allots different individuals, in real time if not in memory. Poetry is seen as able to pay attention to those individual differences that

⁸⁷¹MS 1178, Notebook c. 1923-1924, fol. 22^r.

⁸⁷²Hughes, *Ecstatic Sound*, pp. 13-14.

⁸⁷³William G. O'Donnell, 'Robert Frost at Eighty-Eight', review of Robert Frost, *In the Clearing* (1962) in *The Massachusetts Review*. 4.1 (1962) 213-218 (p. 216).

generalisations about identity (as a result of culture, trait inference or presupposition) quite naturally obscure. Putting the poetry in the context of psychological studies provides literary evidence for the Western model of individual identity, and feeds back to what studies have shown. In concerning themselves with not just recalling the dead, but how best to remember the dead, Hardy and Frost continue the moral work of memory set in motion by Wordsworth.

I have stressed Hardy's and Frost's interest in memory-rich individuals – those to whom one might turn for reminders, or to hear those stories which bind communities. Given the dramatic shift in the way that individuals and societies communicate their memories, Hardy and Frost provide aesthetic evidence of a now-alternative model of shared remembering. Of course, Hardy and Frost were memory-rich individuals themselves, a trait noticed, and valued, by contemporary critics – especially in Hardy's case. In 1928, Arthur S. MacDowall praised Hardy for the way 'in which his mind dwells in memory' and went on to mark Hardy out as memory-rich:

No poet since Wordsworth has depicted memories more constantly and vividly; and Hardy was to show once more that no lapse of time is a bar to the passionate imagination of a remembered thing by poetry. But the recollected life abated nothing of his susceptibility to fresh impressions. One would rather say that it added strength, threading them on a chain of experience; [...] his dramatic poems [...] have the air of being not so much imagined as actually remembered.⁸⁷⁴

Even in this brief, posthumous appreciation, a contrast is set up: the 'recollected life' still manages to be 'fresh', despite the passage of time. If writing about the past carries with it the threat of stagnation, then both Hardy and Frost avoid this by offering the reader the experience of remembering in real-time, and allowing the present to play an important role in the memory process.

Even if Hardy and Frost eventually became cultural institutions of their respective nations, they were also specific to certain regions. This ability to draw upon the local and specific is in part what allows Hardy's and Frost's verse memories their power. Hardy wrote to his friend Sir George Douglas to congratulate him on the completion of his *History of Border Counties*, noting that 'I have brought

⁸⁷⁴Qtd. in Gibson and Johnson, *Thomas Hardy Poems*, pp. 112-13.

out, as you may have seen, those Wessex Poems [...] & they have probably as your history may have, an unspoken disqualification in being “local” – as if humanity could not be sampled as readily in a western county as in, say, a Fleet Street office’ (2.210). The eyebrow-raising “local” is devalued, as something lesser, and possibly irrelevant. Against this, Hardy and Frost posit the local as a means of specifying something (though the nature of this ‘something’ may remain indeterminate) which can then have effect beyond its local sphere.

Critics allow that both of these poets manage to derive a more general effect from their local focus. Somewhat effusively, Van Doren claims that Frost’s ‘poems start at home, as all good poems do [...] but they end up everywhere, as only the best poems do’.⁸⁷⁵ Similarly, W. H. Auden asserts that

What I valued most in Hardy [...] was his hawk’s vision, his way of looking at the world from a very great height [...] to see the individual life related not only to the local social life of its time, but to the whole of human history.⁸⁷⁶

This ‘hawk’s vision’, as Auden calls it, allows Hardy to derive a more general aesthetic vision rather than one curtailed by contemporary concerns (even though, as seen, Hardy depicts a Dorsetshire specific to his historical era). Here the local-to-general pattern moves from the geographical to the temporal, with Auden suggesting this as the reason for (in this case, Hardy’s) longevity. While Auden uses the first person singular pronoun to establish his own personal values, it is arguably this individual, to local society, to all human life chain of association that makes – or has been made by decades of cultural conditioning – Hardy’s poems so valuable to readers. For both critics, one of the hallmarks of good poetry (‘the best’ for Van Doren) is this ability to resonate beyond their own time and space.

This thesis partakes of the growing movement towards the dual appreciation of cognition and culture, seeing them as mutually constitutive rather than understanding them by means of the now-outmoded notion of two [distinct] cultures. Literature and science is a developing field, though, and there is always the fear that

⁸⁷⁵Mark Van Doren, ‘Robert Frost’s America’, *The Atlantic*, 187.6 (1951): 32-34

(p. 32). Van Doren’s essay comes from a 1951 edition of *The Atlantic* dedicated entirely to Frost and featuring him on the cover. As part of the same article, Van Doren compares Frost to Hardy as ‘good poets get better with age’, and aligns Hardy’s Collected Poems with Frost’s Complete Poems (p. 33).

⁸⁷⁶W. H. Auden, ‘A Literary Transference’, in *Hardy: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Albert J. Guerard (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963), pp. 135-142 (pp. 139-40).

science might overshadow poetic nuance with its empirical findings. To temper this view – and to encourage the continued alliance of disciplines – I use a phrase Hardy copied from a 1907 *Albany Review*:

The CLARITY OF SCIENCE proves upon a close examination to be no more than this, that its results are more easily demonstrated than are other results. The advantages which the truths of physical science have over the truths of metaphysic is not that the former are more true than the latter – in truth there is not a more or less – but that they are more demonstrable.⁸⁷⁷

While this is not quite the relationship I have courted here (I deal neither with ‘physical science’ nor ‘metaphysic’), it is fascinating that a man who attended to scientific experimentation so closely should choose to remind himself of this. One subject is not to be rated higher than the other: these are different kinds of knowledges, brought together to open up new lines of enquiry. Hardy himself underlined ‘more true’, interesting in light of the games Hardy and Frost are seen to play with poetic ‘Truth’.

Reading psychology alongside Hardy’s and Frost’s poetry, I argue, underscores the proficiency of poetry. Not only can poetry’s devices be more fully detailed, but studying memory in poetry restores some of the features which psychological studies of memory might preclude. To control experiments, psychology has traditionally set great store by not just exact measurements, but tests of veracity in memory. Poetry instead values what ambiguity can do for memory, the purposeful not giving of information which can promote imaginative remembering from the reader. Furthermore, Hardy’s and Frost’s poetry offers a phenomenology of remembering which, steeped in cultural predilections, reveals how remembering works both within an individual subject and within social groups.

This research opens up several possible avenues for future scholarship. Chapter 1’s scientific enquiry into expectancy patterns might be applied to modernist and later poetry, with its irregular line breaks, typographical inconsistencies and/or short lines, asking whether the modernist revolution has a significant impact on attentional processing. More broadly, the modes of reading poetry via psychological understandings of memory might be applied to other poets or poetic movements. A

⁸⁷⁷*LNTH2*, p. 412. This is taken from C. F. Keary’s ‘Positivism’.

history of poetic recognitions, for instance, read alongside Mandler and others, would allow a more detailed exploration of this long-observed feature in a genre which theorists of recognition have traditionally overlooked (drama being the genre most closely connected with anagnorisis). This thesis also invites further scholarly enquiry into the relationship between Hardy and Frost. One aspect of their poetic memory too extensive to fit within the remit of this thesis is their shared interest in how natural environments might be said to ‘remember’. A similar cultural-cognitive perspective could help further understand resident and visitor experiences of landscapes both actual and remembered.

Commenting on the creation of the *Life* with second wife Florence’s help, Robert Gittings notes that ‘however painful, memories [of Hardy’s earlier life] kept alive the poetry in him’.⁸⁷⁸ This thesis shows that the relationship also holds in the other direction: poetry can similarly keep memories alive. Hardy’s brief poem ‘The History of an Hour’ considers poetry as a technology of artificial memory:

Vain is the wish to try rhyming it, writing it!
 Pen cannot weld into words what it was;
 Time will be squandered in toil at inditing it;
 Clear is the cause!

‘Yea, ‘twas too satiate with soul, too ethereal;
 June-morning scents of a rose-bush in flower
 Catch in a clap-net of hempen material;
 So catch that hour!

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This may at first glance seem to contradict Hardy’s mnemonic efforts in his verse, claiming the recapture of a given moment is a ‘vain’ enterprise, but this is not what he attempts, even with his rhymes and writing. Hardy never offers a ‘history’ of an event (an inventory of objective facts), nor does he ‘weld into words’: he purposefully leaves a freedom to those memories engendered (if not always within the form itself). Eschewing measures of veracity, Hardy’s and Frost’s poems, with their indeterminacies, their half-heard and echoing voices, try less to say ‘what it was’ (since present-tense perception is cognitively unique and separate from any subsequent recall of it), than they offer an experience of ‘what now is’ through memory.

⁸⁷⁸Gittings, *The Older Hardy*, pp. 183-84.

‘I could give all to time’, wrote Frost in a poem of the same name, ‘except – except | What I myself have held’ (*CPPP* 305). Slightly petulant, this reveals the personal attachment we have to our experiences. Fortunately, in this case, the poem ends with the speaker already having ‘crossed to Safety [...] And what I would not part with I have kept’ (*CPPP* 305). Another somewhat quaint poem, ‘The Armful’, fears loss since

For every parcel I stoop down to seize,
I lose some other off my arms and knees,
And the whole pile is slipping, bottles, buns,
Extremes too hard to comprehend at once,
Yet nothing should I care to leave behind *CPPP* 245

The fear of leaving things behind perturbed Hardy and Frost more than being left behind by their respective, modernising societies, and posterity should be thankful for their revitalising of forms, dialect words and local customs: like Hansel and Gretel, Hardy and Frost do ‘leave [things] behind’, but in the sense that those who came after might follow these traces.

Remembering is always personalised, and for all ‘The Armful’'s avuncular charm, it is sobering that the speaker ‘will do my best’ to hold onto everything, ‘With all I have to hold with, hand and mind | And heart, if need be’ (*CPPP* 245). Although, of the two, Hardy is the poet who depicts the pain of forgetting, underneath Frost’s performative joking lies a real concern for one’s ability to keep things. The thinker who Frost perhaps admired most, William James, focused on the feeling of personal connection which characterises remembering, that ‘Memory requires more than just mere dating of a fact in the past. It must be dated in *my* past’.⁸⁷⁹ This returns James to his thinking on selfhood and his oft-used phrase that the objects of memory can be identified by their ‘warmth and intimacy’.⁸⁸⁰ ‘Remembrance [...] is suffused with a warmth and intimacy to which no object of mere conception ever attains’, writes James.⁸⁸¹ Although he makes a big distinction between one person’s direct memory and another’s appropriation of it (which is knowledge, not remembering, for James), this thesis has shown that Hardy’s and

⁸⁷⁹James, *Principles*, p. 612 (original emphasis).

⁸⁸⁰James, *Principles*, p. 218 (then used twice in the next chapter – ‘The Stream of Thought’, p. 232).

⁸⁸¹James, *Principles*, p. 232.

Frost's poetry can evoke a sensation of remembering in the reader. Their verses consistently go beyond – and force the reader to go beyond – a 'mere conception' of any experience, augmenting it through formal properties, allusions, semantic queries and, thereby, making it memorable.

Writing to thank Llewellyn Jones for his kind review compared to Miss Gilder's, Frost also noted 'how wrong she was about Hardy. It is of course as a poet that he will be remembered: such is the best critical opinion in England. But poet or no poet I would ask no better than to be remembered as long as some of his poems will be' (*LRF1* 303). One of Frost's mnemonic aims, then, was specifically channelled through a poet who he recognised, and valued, as writing memorable poems: Thomas Hardy. If Hardy had already been judged a mnemonic success then, in ways sometimes similar, sometimes different, Frost was destined for the same kind of success.

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